

和ケ原聡司

7

イラスト 029

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はなとく魔弓



和ケ原聡司
イラスト
029
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魔界ま



CONTENTS!

魔王、誠実な商売を
改めて決意する
P011

魔王、捨て猫を拾う
P079

魔王と**勇者**、お布団を買いに
P145

はたらく**女子高生**
- a few days ago -
P211



hataraku
maousama!



魔王と勇者、
お布団を買いに



はぐりぐり魔いぞう

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和ヶ原聡司

7

Short Story 1: Demon King, deciding to be an honest merchant



魔王、誠実な商売を改めて決意する

To describe it, to him, this is a technique which disregarded his own safety, and ignored the dangers in front of him.

Even if he was defeated in battle and had to escape, he could not overthrow the battle situation, even if he could fight alone, he was surrounded by enemies.

Without any comrades he could trust, being strict with himself because he didn't know his traitors, the life of the master he served was shortening.

With things as they were, he realised that it was time that he settled everything.

In order to reverse this bleak destiny, he would need to act personally.

“.....Demon King-sama.”

He bowed to his master, who was uneasily eating the food which the enemy sent over.

“Hm? What is it, Ashiya.”

Due to being forced to eat a large amount of food which he obviously couldn't digest at the time which he lacked energy because of torture from the enemy and being deficient in power, having a look of near death on his face, his master----Maou Sadao looked up slightly.

“I wish to take a temporary break.”

“.....Hah?”

“Eh?”

“What?!”

“Ah?”

“Eh.....”

In the Demon Fortress, room 201 of the 50 year old wooden structure apartment “Vila Rosa Sasazuka”, a six tatami room, the lively group of people looked at him with different reactions ---- the face of Ashiya Shiro.

“What? Can I take it as a sign for the disintegration of the Demon King Army?”

The top enemy of the Demon King Army Hero Emilia----Yusa Emi stared at Ashiya’s face in shock.

She was next to the window, one handedly grabbing the front of the shirt of the fallen angel Lucifer----now with a further fallen status of NEET, Urushihara Hanzo, trying to throw him out of the window.

However Emi’s attention was divided by Ashiya, and the grabbed Urushihara was released, falling onto the tatami mat.

“Wheeze.....”

Urushihara, who looked like he was about to suffocate, rolled his eyes and fainted.

The fact that he secretly planted a transmitter inside the Hero’s bag was found out, and what happened just now was the punishment.

It was already fortunate that he wasn't killed.

“Hey, hey, a break refers to.....”

The one who was thrown into a panic because his loyal subject suddenly resigned would of course be his master, the Demon King----Maou Sadao.

Compared to ruling over the Demon World and dominating the foreign world Ente Isla, it was true that Maou did some things which were un-Demon King like.

But even then, he did not remember doing anything which would cause his number one loyal subject, even amongst the Four Kings, being Alsiel----Ashiya Shiro to leave him.

A few days ago, the demonic magic which he regained during the battle with archangel Sarel was totally spent because he had used it up to repair the Japanese facilities which were destroyed during the battle, so as the one who was planning to return to the foreign world Ente Isla triumphantly to attack it, Ashiya lectured him sternly.

However, with regards to that point, because it was something which could not be helped, he should have been forgiven.

“Er, erhm..... is it because I meddled too much?”

The one who asked this uneasily was the only normal human in the Demon Fortress, Japanese High School student Sasaki Chiho.

She was a junior at Maou's workplace----fast food restaurant, the MgRonalds in front of Hatagaya Station, and the only person who knew about Ente Isla and the true identities of the occupants of the Demon Fortress. Since she still harbored feelings of enamourment towards Maou despite knowing he is the

Demon King, she would occasionally bring over food which she made herself.

“Be, because Suzuno-san and I brought food and stole Ashiya-san’s job, if that is the case, I.....”

“Ah, no, it’s not because of that.”

Ashiya frantically explained to Chiho, who was showing a sad expression.

“I am indebted to your assistance, that, erhm, it was really a big help.”

The job of Ashiya in the Demon Fortress is washing clothes, cooking, cleaning, taking care of finances and all of other housework.

And after doing it for so long, his master will be sick of the taste of his food no matter what.

On this note, the food Chiho sent over lightened Ashiya’s burden by a lot.

“Then, what is going on with you. My thoughts are the same as Emilia, however, if it really is a sign of the disintegration of the Demon King Army, it’s fine for you to go anywhere, but if you disappear without telling us the reason, it’s really unsettling.”

The occupant of room 202 of Villa Rosa Sasazuka, also the neighbor of the Demon Fortress and an inquisitor from the Western Continent of Ente Isla, where the Church has the most influence, Crestia Bell----Kamazuki Suzuno, asked this as she tidied up the airtight containers containing the food.

Even though she is someone who also sent over the food she made herself, but Suzuno, like Emi, is an enemy of the Demon Fortress, her food was made from ingredients which have been blessed, which harmed demons to a certain extent. Therefore, even though Ashiya admitted that she helped with the household finances, he did not welcome it much.

In the suffocating silence, Ashiya suddenly looked at Chiho and Emi, and then he shook his head in anguish.

“.....it is difficult for me to explain.....”

“Wait, hey, are you serious, hey.....”

Maou slowly realised that Ashiya seemed to be serious, and while enduring the pain from his bloating stomach due to the food from Chiho and Suzuno, he stood up.

Maou knelt on the tatami close to Ashiya, grabbing his shoulders.

“What, what are you dissatisfied with?! Are you angry with me sometimes buying Frankfurt sausages at the convenience store on the way home recently?! Or, or are you angry with me losing the receipts of the things I buy?! In addition, I didn’t buy two sets of toilet paper on purpose!”

“If there is a General who would feel dissatisfied and leave you because of these small things, you would be better off just replacing them.....”

Because the things Maou thought of in his panic were too minor, Emi, who was behind Maou, gave him a look of pity.

“No, it’s definitely not because I am unhappy with Demon King sama or the working environment.

“So it wasn’t that.”

The Demon King was in a panic because it was found out that he bought things to eat, but as one of the Four Kings of the Demon King Army, for him to not feel any unhappiness about doing the never ending work of a househusband in a six tatami room, it seems to be a problem too.

“It’s just that..... if this goes on, the Demon King Army might meet its tragic end, if I am able to avert this tragedy a little by stepping down.....”

“I don’t understand what you’re saying at all! Explain it properly!”

Maou stared at Ashiya with a serious look on his face.

After master and servant looked at each other with unexplainable expressions for a while

“Well then.....Demon King-sama, please step out for a while.....”

Ashiya bowed his head in defeat and left the house together with Maou.

Excluding the unconscious Urushihara, the three girls looked at each other, not knowing what was going on, but after a short while, Maou came back with a strange air around him.

“Hey, Emi, and Chi-chan.”

“.....What is it.”

“Ye, yes.....”

“I’m sorry, but can the both of you leave for today? I’ll explain later. For today.....let me handle it myself.”

From Maou’s extremely serious expression, his usual calmness could not be felt at all.

Seeing such a face with a hint of some sadness, Emi scoffed and said.

“.....Yes yes, I get it. Let’s go, Chiho.”

“Eh, Yu, Yusa-san, but.....”

“Chi-chan.”

Maou sincerely called out Chiho’s name as she became flustered due to not understanding the situation.

Don’t worry. Chiho seemed to hear this voice.

“.....I, I understand.....but.....”

Even then, Chiho couldn’t help but ask.

“Ashiya-san.....won’t be going elsewhere, right?”

“.....It’ll be fine.”

Ashiya was silent, not wanting to say anything, and Maou answered for him.

“It’s true right? Even if you become a guerrilla by yourself, I would still cut you down.”

“Hurry up and go back!”

Maou, regaining some spirit, nodded to Chiho with some force, and shooed Emi away coldly.

After the two left the proch, they saw Ashiya silently standing in the corridor.

Emi didn't even look back while Chiho bowed a little and left the apartment. Ashiya's eyes followed the backs of the two people, and sighed heavily.

".....What, the situation has become strange."

Perhaps it because only the occupant of Villa Rosa Sasazuka was left, Suzuno did not seem to be in a good mood.

"Now then, I will also....."

Saying that, she seemed to want to stand up in a hurried manner, but was suddenly stopped by Ashiya, who was coming back from outside.

"Wait a moment, Crestia Bell, stay here."

".....What did you say?"

Maou also seemed to look over with a serious expression.

Unlike when Emi and Chiho returned before, Suzuno subconsciously assumed a fighting stance because of the dangerous aura that the two of them emitted, pulling out the hair clasp in her hair in one go.

There was a glow for an instant, and the small clasp holding up her hair became a hammer, which was huge compared to the small sized Suzuno.

Suzuno's hair clasp is a medium for the cross shaped weapon to evolve into a hammer.

It is powerful enough to destroy the transformer facility at Shinjuku with one strike, the important part is that it can defeat the group of three demons who have lost their demonic defeat with no effort at all, however, if she was surrounded like that, it was difficult to conceal the nervousness she felt.

"Don't do stupid things. Do you people think that you can match up to me if you work together?"

Even if Suzuno said this to contain the other party, but Maou and Ashiya did not listen.

"Shut up, Bell. You have to help us, you have no right to refuse."

“Ridiculous, what do you mean by no right to refuse? What are you planning to do with your current power to make it submit?”

“At this time, only you can help us.”

Maou crossed his arms, giving a sidealong glance to Urushihara, who had fainted by the window.

“Urushihara used the household finances irresponsibly, buying transmitters and using up 40,000 yen. You’re helping us to replenish that amount!”

Just then, a large truck, announcing its presence as a refuse recycling point with a honk of its horn, passed by the road outside the apartment.

“.....40,000 yen?”

Suzuno, still assuming her fighting stance, narrowed her eyes.

“Urushihara used that device in order to determine the location of Emi and Chi-chan, who have been kidnapped by Sariel and you, that is the price of that device.

“What, what is a device to determine location?”

Suzuno looked towards Urushihara in surprise.

When she followed Sariel to the government building, it was true that she was curious about how Maou found out about their location.

“How, how is this kind of thing possible.....”

“Anyway, you know it, don’t you, Bell. The reason why you cannot reject us.”

“From tomorrow, Ashiya would go out to work in order to replenish the 40,000 yen cost of the device used to save Chi-chan. The reason why he’s taking a break is for this. No matter how I increase my job shifts from now on, 40,000 yen is an enormous number which cannot be replenished.”

Because of the continuous talk from Ashiya and Maou, Suzuno pouted in regret.

“.....Ugh.”

“Even if it’s not half, but you have to at least take one third of the responsibility. Especially the part where you dragged Chi-chan into this.”

“That, that is.....erhm.....”

Suzuno wanted to rebuke them, but her spirit was weakened not long after, and the hammer dropped onto the tatami.

A few days ago, with the “Evolving Holy Sword, Better Half” that Emi had as the goal, the archangel Sariel came here from the Heaven of Ente Isla, and Chiho who was dragged into this battle was almost taken back to the foreign world by him.

At that time, with Suzuno’s position, she was unable to disobey an angel’s orders and participated in the kidnapping of Chiho.

After that, because of Maou’s active performance, in the nick of time, he managed to save Chiho and Emi who were in danger on the rooftop of the Tokyo Government Building, Suzuno was also released from the corrupt ways of Ente Isla, for Maou to go to the scene without hesitation even though he didn’t know their location was because the transmitter Usushihara planted in Emi’s bag exhibited its use.

“From the result, we cannot completely blame Urushihara for abusing the household finances. In reality, if we did not have the transmitter, I wouldn’t know where to go and will be running around, and Chiho and Emi may have been taken away by that time.”

“Even so, there shouldn’t be a need to spend 40,000 yen, this problem is a little strange.”

“This is consequentialism as well. Of course there is a need to change Usushihara’s bad spending habit, but, just concerning this incident alone.....”

In front of Maou, Suzuno was completely depressed.

“Because of this, you wanted Emilia and Chiho-dono to return first?”

“That’s right. Especially Sasaki-san, if she heard this, with her personality she would say something like it’s her fault and she would pay for it herself.”

Ashiya nodded.

“But, we definitely cannot accept Emilia’s charity. No matter what, that device was used not to save Emilia, but Sasaki-san. If we let Sasaki-san bear the responsibility alone, it would really be too unreasonable. We were the ones who dragged her into the issues of Ente Isla.”

Just now, Chiho saw Ashiya write “debt: 40,000 yen user: Urushibaka” in the household account book, Ashiya only specially emphasized Urushihara’s wastage because he didn’t want Chiho to worry unnecessarily.

It was fine for Chiho and Emi to think that Urushihara had no special reason and only wasted money to buy something which wasn’t needed in order to investigate Emi’s movements since she was the enemy, there was no need for them to worry unnecessarily.

In the end, only the truth of infringing a girl’s privacy was left, so Urushihara was beaten up by Emi until he was half dead.....

“.....Even though it’s the Demon King Army, what’s up with this level of consideration.”

Suzuno mumbled in anger, but it wasn’t heard by Maou and the others.

“.....So, what should I do. How many percent of the compensation must I pay?”

The first thing that comes to mind should be this.

However, no matter it was Maou or Ashiya, they sneered like they looked down on Suzuno.

“Don’t look down on us, we are the proud Demon King Army, and we will definitely not make use of that dirty money from our archenemy the Church.

“Wrong, Ashiya, it sounds strange somewhere.”

“Regarding the point of Urushihara’s wasteful spending, I can replenish it alone! But, for now, I need to leave the Demon Fortress for a few days!

Crestia Bell! The food money for the Demon Fortress during this time will be paid for with your own money!”

“Eh? Use what?!”

The one who protested was not Suzuno, but Maou.

“What is it, Demon King-sama.”

“No.....rather than forcing Suzuno to make it, isn't it good if you finish it in advance?”

“What are you talking about. Excluding the fact that the ingredients for Bell's cooking are blessed, whether it is nutrition or taste, it is first class for homemade food. And we can save on food money as well.”

“Hm, ma, ma, it's not that good.”

“Don't praise her! Stop feeling shy! No, wrong, this is more humiliating than taking her money.....”

“In addition, if Bell keeps cooking, we can hide the truth from Sasaki-san who might come over because she was worried. It's killing two birds with one stone!”

Ashiya stopped Maou's rebukes in a strict manner, however, going by this logic, there is still no way to assist the comrades of the Demon Fortress by making use of Chiho's feelings of making her dislike Suzuno.

“Is, is that so?”

Even though Maou did not look like he understood, Ashiya continued his nagging.

“In addition, if we do not do this, even Demon King-sama is unable to resist the temptation of buying food from outside, causing further wastage to our food money.”

“Ugh.”

Maou, who confessed that he carelessly bought things to eat in his panic, suddenly had nothing to say.

“Besides, I saw with my own eyes that Urushihara ate some delivered fast food when I was not around, the kind of food that placed nutrition and health as a low priority. Frozen delivery food filled with preservatives and chemicals and fresh holy food, it's obvious which one we should choose!”

“No, ma, in reality, because it is summer, there’s not much fresh ingredients left.....”

The mumbles of the stone faced Suzuno was ignored.

“Anyway, it’s won’t take too long! As long as Demon King-sama and Lucifer is able to pass by the next few days in a thrifty manner while I’m not around without letting Sasaki-san or Emilia understand the situation, the household finances of the Demon Fortress will be in the black again, and we can avoid the tragedy of the downfall of the Demon King Army! That is all!”

“Would that really be alright.....”

“Would that really be alright.”

Suzuno and Maou said at the same time.

“.....Aah, anyway, I get it! If this would work, I will assist all of you! I also feel very sorry towards Chiho-dono!”

“What, saying ‘will assist all of you’, you’re just looking down on us Crestia Bell!”

“.....Please allow me to assist all of you.”

Because of Ashiya’s overwhelming presence, Suzuno shook with a red face, but she still submitted in the end.

“.....It’s so noisy, what happened?”

At this time, the thick skinned Urushihara, whose unconsciousness changed to just being asleep, sat up angrily, rubbing his eyes to look towards the three people.

“Ma, it’s that, Urushihara.”

“Eh?”

Maou said softly with much feeling.

“To treasure food, money and friendship.”

“.....what was that?”

No one could answer Urushihara's question.

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“Listen well, the seasonings are here, the rice is going to run out soon and the backup is in the cupboard under the sink. Wipe the rice bucket properly and dry it in the sun before putting in the new rice.”

“.....Aah.”

“I have already sharpened the knives, if you're not satisfied, the whetstone is also under the sink. After using the dishcloths, just hang it up on the mini clothes drying rack.”

“I understand.....”

“Also, clean the rice cooker meticulously after you finished using it each time. After Urushihara uses it, he would definitely leave dry rice somewhere. Don't forget the inner cover as well.”

“Enough, just go already!!”

Morning of the next day, Suzuno, who was summoned to the Demon Fortress, felt frustrated while listening to Ashiya's detailed instructions. Even though she was not a sloppy person, but seeing that Ashiya unexpectedly kept the kitchen and its surroundings neat and tidy just irritated her.

Before leaving, Ashiya's paid great attention and care into the kitchen and anything related to it.

Besides the rice, he even mentioned about the ingredients which Suzuno was responsible for preparing and cooking.

However, the day before, Suzuno had enthusiastically planned to bring over the blessed food she had already cooked, so she felt detested at being requested to do this.

If she was making food at the Demon Fortress, the feeling of “specially bringing over” was done, and it seemed to be better that way.

“Ah, huh, Ashiya hasn’t gone out yet?”

Because of Suzuno’s shout, Maou, who had been sleeping while wrapped in a towel, woke up.

“Fwah.....why is it a little chilly. Because it’s morning? Eh, five thirty?! You have to go out at this time?”

“Because I have to report at the front of Barse Tower at Shinjuku-Nishiguchi at six thirty, so I need to leave earlier.”

“Even though I don’t know where you’re going, but forget it, be careful, and leave quickly.”

“I will keep it in mind.”

Even though Maou knew that Ashiya was going out to work, but to where?

Doing what? For unknown reasons, Ashiya did not want to say.

Because he said it was nothing illegal and non-hazardous, Maou didn’t question him too deeply, but to gather at Shinjuku on a Saturday morning, where is he going?

Flipping aside the towel and standing up, Maou, wearing a short sleeved shirt, hugged his arms, shivering slightly.

“.....I already made breakfast. If you’re cold, it’ll be better once you drink some miso soup.”

Seeing the shivering Maou, Suzuno said this with some distaste.

There was a claypot on the stove, and it was steaming in the lower temperature.

“Ooh, that quickly? Then I’ll help myself.”

Seeing Maou happily run towards the pot, Suzuno furrowed her brow in further distaste while Ashiya nodded in satisfaction.

“Then, I’m leaving, Demon King-sama. Please periodically pay attention to Urushihara’s movements.”

“Aah, it’ll be fine. He was almost killed by Emi, so he won’t carelessly spend money anymore.....at least within this month.”

“Y, yeah, this month.....”

At this time, Urushihara was wrapped up in his towel blanket like a bagworm, in deep sleep.

“.....No matter what, it’s really cold huh.”

“Yeah, it’s too cold for the middle of summer. Is it going to rain?”

Even though it was more than one hour after they saw Ashiya off, and the sun had risen, waking up the whole street, but the temperature had not risen.

For Maou and Suzuno, who did not have a television or a radio, or even a mobile phone which can receive news, it was something they did not know. Today, the high pressure winds of the Pacific Ocean decreased, and because of the influence from the approaching low pressure winds from China, the temperature of the whole of the Kanto region is on a decreasing trend.

Even though the highest temperature for the past few days is close to 30 degrees, today’s temperature was reported as 19 degrees.

Urushihara had not woken up yet, but he seemed to hug the towel and curl up because of the cold.

“Should I wear long sleeves today.....”

Maou opened the cupboard and pulled out the easy storage container with the winter clothes, but

“No matter how cold it is, wearing a wool sweater or a thick coat would be too hot.....”

The box contained real winter wear.

For their first winter in Japan, Maou and Ashiya spent it wearing bulging layers of clothes.

In order to prevent them from freezing to death in the Demon Fortress which had no proper heating facilities and no blankets, they bought low cost and very thick clothes. Seeing these, the memories from that time surfaced.

“Strange.....we should have bought innerwear from HEATCHIC last year.”
(T/N: HEATCHIC is a parody of HEATTECH.)

Ashiya and Maou should have bought one set of heat retaining innerwear when it was released at UNIXLO last year.

But, after searching and searching, he could not find any HEATCHIC in the storage container.

“Once Alsiel isn’t around, you can’t even find the place where the winter wear is stored?”

Suzuno threw him a look of realization. Maou avoided her gaze.

“You’re really a person who doesn’t know where the backup new socks bought in advance are when your existing socks has a hole.”

“Idiot, how can there be new socks bought in advance. If the socks have a hole, it would definitely be Ashiya who mends it.”

Behind the two people, Urushihara turned over.

“.....Demon King, are you that poor?”

“Are you looking down on the poor because you’re a high ranking inquisitor? Things should be used for as long as possible, this is called thrifty living.”

Maou, with some indignation, searched a storage container in the corner of the room and took something out from inside.

“.....A light bulb? Is it prepared for the washroom?”

Maou took a light bulb out from a cardboard box with 20W written on it, and passed it to Suzuno.

“Shake it.”

“Hm?Huh, isn’t it already faulty? Did you forget to take it out on garbage collection day?”

“Of course not. When mending the toe portion of the socks, place it within the torn sock to make it easier to mend. Try it when you get the chance next time.”

Urushihara turned over again.

“By the way, Ashiya’s sewing sets were all from the 100 yen store.....”

“That’s enough.”

Suzuno started to feel sad.

“.....You’re working afternoon shift huh, do you need lunch?”

“Yeah, please do.”

Maou carefully kept the faulty light bulb.

“.....I went grocery shopping earlier, come over and let me know when you want to eat. Wake Lucifer up first then.”

“Yeah, sorry for the trouble.”

After saying some necessary words, Suzuno returned to her own room. The instant the dressing table opposite the porch showed her own reflection, Suzuno kneeled on the ground without taking off her shoes, her head bowed in thought.

“A Demon General uses a faulty light bulb to mend socks.....”

Because the bicycle was broken by Suzuno in the commotion a few days back, Maou could only walk to work for now.

Because he had to walk to work in the morning, even if the weather was cool, he still sweated all over, but it should be even cooler at night.

In the evening, Chiho, who had come to work after class ended, asking in a worried manner.

“That.....in the end, Ashiya-san.....”

“Huh? Aah.....”

In the end, after making Chiho and Emi go home, they were never told about what happened to Ashiya in the end.

But, towards Chiho, they might have felt some responsibility to say the truth, so the Demon King Army and Suzuno agreed to lie to her to an acceptable degree.

“Ah----that, it’s nothing serious. He said that he found a higher paying job.”

“Higher paying job.....is it?”

“Yeah. But you see, didn’t the commotion with Sarii and Suzuno just happen not long ago? Deciding to leave house at this point of time is rather worrying, right?”

He wasn’t lying.

It’s just that he didn’t mention it was not for strengthening the black figures, but for replenishing the red figures.

“Is, is that so. Th, then, he’ll be back at night?”

“Ah----.....it seems.....he needs to stay out for a few days.”

“It’s a job which provides accommodation?”

“About that.....”

The reason why Maou was so vague wasn’t because he was hiding something, in reality, he also didn’t know where Ashiya went.

Maou knew that when he started working at MgRonalds, Ashiya would sometimes go out to work on his own, but he didn’t know all the details of the job.

“I’m not too sure as well, he only said that it was a job which the Commander of the Demon King Army cannot do.”

This was the conversation that occurred when Maou was called out to the corridor.

“Wh, what is that? Li, like something dangerous.....”

“It doesn’t seem to be illegal or something dangerous. Ma, this is what Ashiya wants to do, so I’m not worried.

“Is that so.....”

Because of Maou's vague answer, Chiho's expression darkened. Seeing this, Maou hurriedly changed the topic before the perceptive Chiho could sense anything.

"That's not right, because Ashiya is not at home, Usushihara is the only one left in the Demon Fortress, if I had to choose, Urushihara is a bigger source of worry. Carelessly spending money, leaving the main switch to the gas on, I hope that doesn't happen....."

"Aah....."

He tried to crack a joke, but Chiho's expression did not seem to change.

"Ah.....that's right."

With complicated feelings, Maou patted Chiho's shoulder.

"Don't worry about it too much, if you're worried no matter what, Ashiya will still cook for us when he returns. At that time, that guy will say something."

".....Alright, then what delicious things should I make and bring over?"

Chiho's smile finally returned a little, and at the same time, the evening customer flow started to increase and Maou and Chiho returned to the tumult of their work.

9 o' clock at night, the high school student Chiho finished her work and returned home.

Even though he did not fool her completely, if Ashiya was able to replenish the 40,000 yen red figure when he returns, there would be no need for her to carry an unnecessary responsibility even if it was revealed.

If he allowed a high school girl to bear responsibility because he was careless, it will spoil the proud name of the King of Demons.

He was only watching the house with Urushihara when Ashiya isn't around.

".....This is the most worrisome thing."

Maou walked on the darkened streets, even if he was talking to himself, he did not delay his Friday's work and finished this workday smoothly.

As expected, the temperature at night fell a little, and it was even a little cold. Suzuno said that tonight's dinner was Udon.

Even though it wasn't something which should be eaten in the middle of summer, but in this temperature, it was something to look forward to, however a shocking incident attacked Maou when he returned home.

"H.....hey, this, what's going on?"

The instant Maou stepped onto the porch of the Demon Fortress as he returned home, he was greeted with a sea of white.

In the room sat Suzuno with a reluctant look on her face and Urushihara, who looked like he was going to fall apart from despair.

And.

In front of them were things which Maou never seen before.

Fresh fruit, countless detergent, today's newspaper and.....

"New model of fire extinguisher, five sets of duvets, and a water purifier in the sink over there."

"Wh.....wha.....wha....."

"Give up, about 45,000 yen was spent."

Suzuno's voice was like a call from the God of Death from a faraway world. Chiho, sitting on the bed in her own room and hugging a Rilakkuma cushion, was on the phone.

".....Ah, hello hello, I'm Chiho, I'm sorry for calling so late. Yes, it seems like he went out to work.Yeah, it seems like he is staying outside so he can't go back immediately.....so it's like that after all."

Chiho spoke with an expression which could not be called happy.

"Because tomorrow is a Saturday, I'm making some side dishes to bring over. I can only do this. Yes, yes, then goodbye."

Hanging up the phone and throwing it on the bed, Chiho lay on her side and took a deep breath.

"I said some bad things to Urushihara-san huh."

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“Ugh, Urushihara, you, don’t tell me you once again.....”

Urushihara, who only carelessly spent money on computer parts, snacks and cooling beverages used the good opportunity when Maou and Ashiya weren’t at home to buy whatever he wanted, this guess flashed through Maou’s mind.

But

“No, that’s not it. I didn’t buy these domestic like items because I liked it!”

He never thought that Urushihara would protest in an uncomfortable manner.

“Then what are these?! When I left in the morning, these things didn’t exist in this room, right?!”

“Calm down, Demon King.”

Suzuno, who sat by herself with a reluctant expression, held out something akin to a receipt towards Maou.

“What is this, receipt.....no, proof of purchase? 2000 yen, external hard drive?”

“.....Even if it’s me, I also know the reason for Ashiya going out to work.”

Urushihara mumbled with his head bowed.

“Even though it’s not possible to earn it back with one person, but I want to return some of it.....”

“In short, Lucifer seemed to have met with trading with coercion.”

“Trading with coercion?”

Because of this unfamiliar term, Maou felt a little lost.

“It’s the method of claiming to buy expensive metals, entering one’s house, and forcefully buying it with a very low price.”

“.....Aah, I remember now.”

When interacting with the elderly during the breaks in neighbourhood cleaning, he remembered hearing about this topic.

According to the information, they were merchants who targeted the elderly and housewives, he also heard it from Watanabe-san, a regular at their store, precautionary measures were also printed on the circulating boards.

“So, to replenish that 40,000 yen red figure, you wanted to sell the computer parts?”

“.....that was what it was supposed to be at first.....”

“It seems like he was tricked by a very evil merchant.”

Suzuno actually gave Urushihara a look of pity.

“It seems like he executed the trading by coercion after pretending to come and collect things. When I sensed something was wrong and came over, it has already become like this.”

Bu, but, it’s like that even for the newspaper and fruits?! From fire extinguisher till fruits, what kind of scale of trading by coercion is this.”

“Sorry, the newspapers and fruits are another transaction. It was bought without considering the objections.”

“Oi.”

Maou knelt down heavily.

“Don’t you know the ways of the world! Just say you don’t need them and reject him!”

“But I tried to say it, and he threatened that he wouldn’t leave unless I buy something, you know?! And the bell on the porch kept ringing, if it was broken, then there is a danger of increasing our spending.”

“So in the end you bought everything, and fell into his trap!”

“Even so, he would avoid it by saying vague things no matter what I said, and just wouldn’t leave. Should I say he is persuasive, or too sly.....”

What kind of sales tactics were they for the fallen angel Demon General Lucifer to say this about the sales tactic.

Having never met this kind of person, Maou was unable to imagine it.

“Demon King, it’s useless even if you scold Lucifer now. Even though he is supposed to be a Demon General, he is unable to fend off someone who is forcefully selling newspapers, it is pointless to lecture this kind of fallen angel.”

“Bell, what you’re doing is rubbing salt on the wound, salt!”

“We can forget about the newspapers and fruits. For the newspapers, we can complain to the retail store and get back the money, and the fruits aren’t that expensive. But the quality is quite bad, if I saw the same thing in the supermarket, I wouldn’t buy it even as half price.”

“So I was saying, this is rubbing salt in the wound.....”

“Compared to these, the problem is the remaining three things. Lucifer.”

“A, aah..... Maou, look at this.”

Urushihara pointed towards the computer.

“What is it, a web page? Deluxe Life International Holdings..... huh, this long company name without much meaning.....can’t they write it with alphabets?”

“This is the web page of the purchasing company. There was a telephone number written, so I tried calling. Using the Sky Phone.”

(T/N: Sky Phone is the parody of Skype.)

“And then?”

“There was no response. I investigated a little, and discovered that the head office is in a mixed tenant building in Tokyo city. Then I infiltrated the network to check the IP address, but the website itself uses a rented server, the company’s computers are not connected to the internet.”

“..... And that means?”

“The fire extinguisher, duvets and water purifiers.....might not be refundable. It’s definitely an unscrupulous company.”

“Hey, hey, wait a moment, did you just say that you’re going to give up on that 45,000 yen.....”

Urushihara and Suzuno suddenly turned away.

Urushihara did not have his own wallet, and besides the money saved in the bank, all the remaining cash was in the custody of Ashiya and Maou.

Which also means that this was paid with the credit card or the money in the bank.

Ashiya went out to work in order to replenish that 40,000 yen. And you actually.....”

Spent another extra meaningless 45,000 yen.

Maou and Urushihara felt a chill down their spine.

“If we do not think of something before Ashiya comes back.....”

“Yeah, he would definitely blow his top like a demon.”

“He’s a demon to begin with.....”

Suzuno’s rebuttal was ignored.

“Ashiya did say he will come back on Sunday night, so.....”

“If we don’t think of anything before that, I’m afraid we would not be able to see the sunrise on Monday.”

“It, it’s not my fault!”

“No, I don’t think that Alsiel would listen to this kind of excuse. He is the type of person who would say that it’s your oversight.”

“As I thought?!”

Because of Suzuno’s calm analysis, Maou’s mournful cry shook the whole apartment.

※

“Is it here.....”

Maou confirmed with the tenant directory set up within the building. He never expected that Deluxe Life something Company would be within walking distance from the Demon Fortress.

He had originally thought that it must be in the busy or bustling streets in the city centre, but he never expected that it would be in a building along the arterial road which intersected with Koshu-kaido.

“Ma.....it doesn’t seem to be that exaggerated.”

As Urushihara said that it was a swindler company, Maou was mentally prepared to face a matching development, so he made up his mind, walked up the stairs, and saw a clearly displayed business plate and a neat working area on the other side of the reinforced glass. He could also see the silhouette of a female employee.

Maou, who had come to refund the products which Urushihara had bought through coercion, rubbed his chest in relief.

Pulling open the door, and entering, the female employee he saw from outside noticed him and stood up.

“Welcome, how may I help you?”

“Erhm.....actually we were approached by your company yesterday in the door-to-door sales.....”

Maou explained the situation.

No matter what, in order for the conversation to proceed smoothly, Maou roughly explained that the door-to-door sales was accepted yesterday, but he was not the one at home at that time, and the things that were bought had not been used before so he wished to get a refund.

“I understand. Yesterday was in Sasazuka.....let me check the person in charge for this, please wait a moment.”



Unexpectedly, the female employee quickly started searching for the person in charge without any complaints. From the reception area, he could see her take a thick folder out from a drawer, and after flipping through the documents for a while, she slowly picked up the internal phone.

“This is the reception.....it’s a customer who wants a refund.....yes, I understand.”

The female employee put down the phone receiver, and pointed at a chair at the side of the reception area.

“The person in charge of the refunds will be here soon, please take a seat.”

“Ah, alright.”

It was unexpectedly smooth.

Perhaps, the reason why they didn’t pick up Urushihara’s call yesterday was because the phone line of the small company was busy.

Maou had just sat on the chair when a man wearing a western suit came out from inside. After speaking to the female employee for a short while, he walked over.

The man was thin and his stature was similar to Maou’s, wearing spectacles.

“Sorry for the wait. I am the person in charge of refunds, Kuryuu. You are Maou-san, is it?”

“Hello.....”

“So, the items which you wish to refund are.....these, right, fire extinguisher and duvets, as well as a simple water purifier.”

“Ah, that’s right, it’s these items, these items.....”

Suddenly, Maou felt that something was amiss.

He didn’t say his own address.

And he did not remember mentioning the products he was (forced) to buy.

Could it be possible that the sales of the company yesterday were only from the Demon Fortress?

“Erhm.....I deeply apologise, basically, refund is not possible.”

“.....Eh?”

Because of this first sentence which was thrown over, this feeling that something was amiss grew.

“Especially the water purifier, even if you said that you never used it before, it was filled with water when it was installed to try it out, so it’s difficult to say that it has purely never been used before.....”

“Wait, wait a moment, b, but, it was only used for that?!”

This was the truth.

Suzuno, who knew Urushihara had been forced into buying, did not use any tap water.

“I understand what you are saying fully, but this is what was set in the clauses regarding the water purifiers.”

“About the clauses.....”

The paper which Kuryuu passed over was something Maou had never seen before.

“I did not receive such a thing yesterday.”

“I should have given it to you, the safekeeping is the customer’s responsibility after, even for me, I.....”

“It’s not possible to lose it in one day.”

“That may not be the case.....”

Kuryuu shrugged it off in a vague manner.

Ignoring the troubled Maou, Kuryuu continued to speak.

“Honestly, it’s difficult to refund the fire extinguisher as well.”

“Hah?!”

“Do you know the installation standards for fire extinguishers?”

“Installation standards?”

“That’s right, in collective housing, the distance between the fire extinguishers and the stairs and rooms should be 20m for every floor, and it must be placed on a mounting block with a label hung over it.”

“No, normally it should be one public fire extinguisher in the corridor.”

“Even so, if it’s that apartment, there should be two of them per level. It is obligatory to place one every 20m, and it differs by the land area of the building. If we remove something which has already been installed, it would be considered illegal even for me, so.....”

Even if that really was the case, it was not an obligation which Maou, as a rental tenant, should spend money to fulfill.

At this point, Maou slowly started to understand.

“So, how about the duvets.”

“About that, as long as it is unopened, and is totally unused, it can be refunded. It’s a set of seven duvets.”

“.....It should be a set of five.”

“No, it’s a set of seven, it is stated here in detail.”

Kuryuu was holding a receipt list on a carbon copy paper. And Urushihara’s ugly alias signature was also printed on it, it looked similar to the receipt left at the Demon Fortress.

However, in the printed contents of the products, the number of duvets became seven.

Because they had tampered with the carbon copy paper.

“.....if it’s five duvets, the quantity isn’t enough, in this case, even if the five sets have not been used, compared to a full refund, they can only be purchased back as a second hand product.”

In short, they did not have any intention of accepting the refund from the start.

They kept a low profile, using poor and suspicious excuses as well as small tricks to con the customers of their money.

Because the products themselves do not have any defects, even if they were forced to buy something useless, there was no way for them to get a refund, in the end they could only swallow their anger and tolerate it, they should be going along these lines of thinking.

“Do you plan to play opossum till the end?”

Even Maou's face tightened, and his tone became rough.

“What do you mean by playing opossum? This is a completion of a transaction on the basis of the agreement between us and you, the customer. The receipt was kept as well. I don't remember selling substandard products either.”

“What completion of a transaction on the basis of an agreement. This is obviously a damn fraud, why would any idiot willingly buy a duvet with only the blanket in the middle of summer.”

“.....That is, that idiot is in the room at your home, you know.”

Suddenly the tone Kuryuu used changed.

The warm looking face twisted in an instant.

“Wasn't it your family who said that they wanted to buy? I just moved the products in. It's not as if I threatened you into buying it. The way you're making things difficult is troubling for us. Is your family what is known as a claimant?”

“What?!”

Maou was extremely angry, but Kuryuu remained composed.

“It is alright for us. The agreement and the signature of your family member for receiving of the products are present. The products are not substandard at all. In that case, if you want to say that we have tricked your family, it's fine in a trial or any other things. Ma, in this case, as the ones with the documents, we will win, but after that, we will accuse you of being a bad intentioned claimant. In this situation, we will definitely win, and the lawyer fees will be paid by your family, is it alright even if it's like this?”

“You.....this.....”

Anyone who suddenly shows this attitude cannot be someone to conduct legal business.

Even if it's Maou, if he thought about it calmly, what Kuryuu said might sound logical, but he should know that it is completely illogical as well.

However, Maou did not have any time to think.

He did not know anything about the actual court system, and, when this time was spent, Ashiya would have already returned.

However, if he acted on anger, he would not be able to change the current situation.

The other party was not conducting sales. He is a conman who tricks others. These people are demons wearing human skin. Maou completely put aside his own issues and glared at the other party with all his might, but no matter how much Maou, who had lost most of his demonic magic in his battle with Sarel, glared at him, the other party ignored it.

“So, do you still want a refund even if you understand that? If you’re so persistent, I’ll call the police.”

Kuryuu seemed to intentionally pat his leg and stood up. And the female employee, who looked like a good person, held the phone receiver in a manner like she was tied down, and looked over.

Even if he continued to talk, the other party would not cooperate. But if he left, then he will definitely lose.

But if he was too persistent, perhaps the people getting called over aren’t police but accomplices who are more evil.

Because Maou did not have much demonic magic as he just finished a battle, he was completely a young human.

“If you’re able to call, then try it.”

At this time.

Because of the voice which was heard from the opened door, Maou, Kuryuu and the female employee turned around.

When Maou saw the person who came and was about to shout out.

“.....E”

“Please do! It’s good if you can help us call them over!”

The one who covered over Maou's shout and faced Kuryuu straight on was someone who definitely could not appear here, even by coincidence----Emi.

"W, wh, who are you."

"Me? The comrade of justice."

"Hah?"

Kuryuu sneered at Emi's honest self-introduction.

"So, what do you want to do, call the police, or not?"

"....."

This time, it was Emi's turn to sneer at the unmoving Kuryuu and female employee.

"Seriously, if you don't have the courage to really call the police, you'll be suspected if you're not careful, and you can still shamelessly say that you will call the police."

"I say.....even though I don't know who you are, but if you continue saying belittling words, then it won't be as simple as just calling the police, okay?"

Aah?"

Kuryuu let out a voice with an even lower pitch compared to when he faced Maou. But if she felt shaken with just this standard, she wouldn't be Emi.

Even though it wasn't known what group of people was referred to when 'not just calling the police', but, as long as the people who came are Japanese, if the battle power of all the self-defence troops were not mobilised, they would not be Emi's match at all.

".....that's right, this company suddenly threatened a visiting customer. Did you record it properly?"

Emi took a very thin phone out of her pocket and the video function was currently activated.

"It's perfect."

Isn't the voice coming out of the speaker Chiho's voice?

".....Wha!"

"So? Do you still want to call the police?"

Emi smirked, asking Kuryuu.

“If you want to call, I would pass all the recordings taken after that man came to the police.”

“.....”

“W, when.....”

Was it followed by Emi? Maou, who did not expect it, represented the thoughts of everyone present.

Emi and the people of Deluxe Life something stared at each other for a while, and Emi was the one who retracted her spear first.

“.....Now then, let’s go back.”

“Hah?!”

Maou was stunned.

“Even if we stay here, these people would not process it honestly. So as what they wish, let’s report to the police station or the court.”

“Hey, hey, Emi!”

Maou frantically chased after Emi, who left the company without hesitation. He could feel the gloomy stares of the people from Deluxe Life something coming from behind him.

“Su, Suzuno?!”

Leaving the building, he saw that Suzuno was waiting there, fully prepared.

“I’ll leave it to you.”

Emi seemed to know it, and only said this to Suzuno.

“Yeah.”

Suzuno walked past Maou and Emi, entering the building.

Then, she came back less than one minute later.

“OK?”

“No problems.”

Feeling confused, Maou looked towards Suzuno.

“.....Ma, to explain it in one sentence.”

“Ah?”

“Emi and Chiho-dono have already predicted your plan of action.”

“What?”

Maou couldn't help but look towards Emi, and Emi, with a look of embarrassment, hugged her arm and looked to the side.

“At the beginning.....that, I got angry without considering anything.....”

“Huh?”

“Then I thought carefully about it later, that is.....about how you came to the government building without any hesitation, that.....”

“Wh, what is it, I can't hear it properly.”

“S, so! Even though I dislike it, even though I really dislike it, even though I don't think this was its purpose at the beginning, but it helped in the end, so I came to apologise to Lucifer! Then, some strange things happened.....”

“Aah, is that so.....”

“I, I feel weird owing you a favour, but returning kindness with ingratitude will harm my title as the Hero! If I have to redeem myself, it looks like the cost in terms of the economic effect will exceed this 40,000 yen, so, I will wipe the slate clean this time! Is that alright?!”

“I, I never thought of anything as exaggerated as economic effect.....ma, if you're going to help me, I'll be very grateful. Sorry.”

“As, as long as you know it.”

“Ah, that's right, since you meddled, let me ask one thing of you.”

“I'm not meddling! I'm just repaying a debt! So, what do you want to ask?!”

Maou bowed sincerely to the red eared Emi.

“After everything quiets down.....keep it a secret from Ashiya, Suzuno as well, I beg you!! Once on the topic of money, that guy becomes very scary!”

This was a heartfelt request without any pretense. It did not resemble a request which should come from the king of demons.

Hearing this, Emi and Suzuno, while stunned, sighed heavily.

※

“Ah, welcome back.....Maou-san, is it alright now?”

Once they returned to the apartment, they saw Chiho sitting in front of the computer.

“A, aah, yeah, but, why is Chi-chan here.”

“Rather than asking this, please look at this.”

“Huh?”

“Do you know the installation standards for fire extinguishers.....”

“This, this voice?!”

Chiho operated the computer, and from the computer, the voice of that detestable Kuryuu was heard.

In addition, in the footage, on the other side of the transparent doors of the company, the faces of Maou and Kuryuu could obviously be seen, the video footage was that clear.

“Yeah, it was recorded clearly.”

“Emi.....you, this is.....”

“We roughly heard the situation from the house guard who couldn’t even protect his own home.”

“.....”

Urushihara sat in the corner of the room, unmoving, like he was bearing the humiliation.

“There’s no time right? Even though the methods are a little forceful, there is a need to gather required information.”

“But, how did you get this footage.....”

“Quickly thank the advancements in IT. The video and sound were recorded and transmitted to the computer using the Sky Phone App on my ultra slim phone.”

“Sky Phone refers to.....the telephone function Urushihara added on the computer?”

“Correct. The computer’s too old, so I was a little worried, but as expected of someone glued to the computer every day, it’s very well maintained.”

A Sky Phone is a phone which uses internet connection, recently, within the cutting edge information endpoint ultra slim mobile phone, shortened to slimphone, Sky Phone was installed as a software.

According to the different operating environments, as long as there is a camera function, it can be used as a video phone.

“It doesn’t feel like I have been praised at all.”

The house guard who was unable to guard his own phone said a little angrily.

“Oh my, and it was one of the rare chances I praised you.”

Emi raised an eyebrow, and looked at the footage over Chiho’s shoulder.

“In addition, there’s still this kind of thing.”

Chiho operated the computer, and clicked on an icon which Maou did not know the meaning of at all.

“Urushihara-san is the type of person who doesn’t clean up, and that actually helped. The auto-recording system was on, so the footage of outside the apartment from the day before was kept.”

“I told you, it doesn’t feel like you’re praising me at all!”

“No, whatever was said just now wasn’t praise at all.”

Suzuno, who sat in the middle of the apartment because she didn’t understand computers like Maou, mumbled.

“The footage outside the apartment.....this, from that webcam?”

Maou was referring to the webcam which Urushihara bought on his own to install in the window that can only monitor the outside.

Even though the footage was in black and white and wasn’t clear, from the window of the Demon Fortress, the road outside could be seen.

A commercial van was parked there, and from the passenger seat, a man wearing a western suit alighted.

“Ah! Isn’t that Kuryuu!”

The figure who took boxes out from the trunk which seemed like they contained the duvets and water purifier after alighting should be the one in charge of the refunds, Kuryuu.

“Anyway, from the beginning, he had come with the purpose of trading by coercion. He only said he came to purchase things. Promotion staff who go door to door and fake their purpose for doing so are people who should be prosecuted.”

“Is, is that so?”

“If it’s a promotion, say it’s a promotion, if it’s selling, say it’s selling, if it’s purchase, say it’s purchase, they have the obligation to clear state their reasons for visiting. In this case, he clearly did not clearly state that there are other transactions besides purchase, and this is strong evidence to prove that it had already planned to sell things from the start.....it would be good if there is a shot of the license plate. Well, there’s a clear picture of the face, so it should be fine.”

“B, but, why do you know so much?”

Emi said with an expression that it was common knowledge.

“There are many strict guidelines with regards to telemarketing. Even I specialize in receiving calls, and am not a seller or a promoter, but I was training in all similar aspects.”

Emi was different from Maou, a large part of the reason why she knew so much about the Japanese information communication technologies is because of her occupation as a call center employee in the Japanese mobile phone company Docodemo.

“Japan is really good. So much obvious evidence can be left just by individual effort. If local priests and evidence of social misconduct can be left like that in the Western Continent, everything would be so much easier.....”

Suzuno said this with lament after listening to Maou and Emi’s conversation, but the one who reacted to this was Urushihara.

“That, but Emi, just now you said something like you would report this to the police station or court, but videos or photos taken in secret cannot be used as evidence, right? Won’t we be blamed in return?”

“That is referring to them being unable to be used as evidence in court.”

Chiho said as she watched the computer footage.

“In addition, even though this is the secret recording of video, this video was taken for the sake of self-protection, so it is not considered secret photography because it isn’t illegal and does not violate privacy. If this company is really an illegal merchant, the police won’t treat it as ‘evidence’, but will use it as ‘investigative material’, there are situations like that.”

“As expected of someone whose father is a policeman.”

Because the knowledge didn’t match what should be known by a high school student, Emi exclaimed thus.

“It’s not anything that amazing.....next.....actually I’ve been concerned about this for a while.”

Chiho turned towards Urushihara shyly.

“Urushihara-san, how old are you?”

“Hah?”

“Erhm, I’m not referring to demon or fallen angel or anything like that, I’m referring to how you are in Japan.....”

“Aah.....what was the age which was decided before?”

Urushihara looked toward the representative of the Demon Fortress.

The name Urushihara Hanzo was the name Maou thought of after he decided to live in the Demon Fortress at Sasazuka.

“You’re like a brat, so I remembered writing 18 years old in the household registration.”

Maou and Urushihara, and of course Ashiya, did a household and citizen registration in order to live properly in Japan.

After they decided to live in Japan, they did this via hypnosis. If they did not have a household registration in Japan, they can't even maintain even the basic standard of living.

“He’s a kid in reality anyway.”

“He’s a child. Even Chiho-dono is a few times more like an adult compared to him.”

Because of Emi and Suzuno’s rebukes, Urushihara’s face tightened, but Chiho expression was cheerful instead.

“Which means, Urushihara-san is still a minor!”

(T/N: The legal adult age in Japan is 20 years old.”

Chiho clapped her hands once with a smile and Emi seemed to realize something because of this.

“Is it that, Cooling Off?”

“What? What is Cooling Off?”

“Cooling Off, in simple terms it means that within a fixed time period, you can unconditionally cancel the contract or sign up requests which were brought out of rashness. Especially in door to door sales, there are many situations where people enter a contract without getting the full picture, it’s is an assistance measure to consumers. Within a fixed period, if the guardian says ‘I don’t allow it!’, any kind of contract can be cancelled quickly. In reality, in many cases of the signing up of new mobile phone contracts, most of them were scrapped because of this reason.....”

“Maou-san, did you see it before at the bottom area of the curriculum vitae? Something like minors just obtain the consent of their guardians.”

“Aah, now that you mention it, there seems to be something like that.....”

It had been a long time since he had filled up a curriculum vitae, but he remembered that there was such a clause in a field which he did not need to write anything.

“Because a complete employment contract is needed when working. Even

though this situation is a little different, if an agreement is needed to allow a minor to handle their own finances, a guardian's consent is normally needed."

"But, I'm not Urushihara's guardian right? Even the household registration is different, will it still work that way?"

"I don't remember treating Maou as a father."

"I don't want a brat like you either."

The two people went through a meaningless conversation.

"This useless angel is being taken care of due to you working right? If that's the case, you can be treated as a legal representative, which is equivalent to a guardian."

"Hey, Emilia, your pronunciation just now is a little strange?"

(T/N: In Japanese, fallen angel and useless angel are spoken in a similar manner.)

Emi ignored Urushihara's protest.

"This time, you spent 45,000 yen altogether right? I don't think that the impoverished you would give Lucifer that much allowance, and it is obviously higher than the upper limit of what Lucifer can arbitrarily spend, so I think you can use Cooling Off."

Maou, who had a dark expression due to anger until just a while ago, brightened up visibly when he heard Emi's words.

Even he could avoid making Ashiya angry because of this, it's fine even if he called Chiho and Emi goddesses.

"Then, for the transmitter which Urushihara originally bought, Green on....."

"It's Cooling Off! It doesn't apply for normal online purchases. It was paid with the credit card which was under your name, and you have reached legal adult age, and online purchases are something can be done after careful consideration, right? If it's not something which has not been used before or a defect, it would be difficult to unconditionally ask for refund."

“Is, is that so.....”

Maou was a little disappointed.

“But, the device helped me and Yusa-san because it was working normally.”

At that time, Chiho stood up from beside the table and stood in front of Urushihara.

“Urushihara-san, I’m sorry for before. Even though I was saved thanks to Urushihara-san, I said very mean things.”

“.....I didn’t do anything much.....the one who helped in reality was Maou.”

In a strange manner, Urushihara, who was apologized to directly, looked to the side, embarrassed.

“But, if not for Urushihara-san’s power, Maou-san might not be able to come. Actually, I wanted to pay a portion of the device cost together with Yusa-san.”

“Ah? Is, is that so?!”

Because Chiho’s words were too unexpected, Maou and Urushihara looked towards Emi and Emi bore those gazes with some distaste.

“That miser Alsiel didn’t say anything to me. Even if I say I would pay some of it, he wouldn’t accept it honestly, so.....”

Differently from before, Emi looked towards Urushihara resolutely.

“From the result, it is the truth that I was saved by you, but Lucifer didn’t plant that transmitter in my bag for that purpose in the beginning. So, this part of the favour is cleared. Treat it as cleared with Lucifer’s punishment earlier. On the other hand, I was also responsible for dragging Chiho into this, so I will try my best to recover your losses as well.....Chiho also came to help in order to pay a debt of gratitude. It should be better if it was put in that way.”

It felt as if a few messy excuses were found, but Emi and Chiho will become Maou and Urushihara’s sources of support.

Currently, this is enough.

“We’ve already gotten a lot of advantages things. So, where exactly should we hand them to? The police station?”

Maou changed the topic, showing that he already knew what the both of them meant.

In response to Maou’s question, Emi and Chiho shook their heads simultaneously.

“From the contract, it’s not an illegal act. Even if the police come in, as long as the business is not more evil than now, we won’t be able to solve it before Alsiel returns.”

“Then, what should be done.”

“Go here.”

Chiho returned to the computer, searched a particular website, and pointed it out.

The name of an organization Maou was not familiar with was written there.

“Tokyo Municipal Integrated Consumer Living Centre?”

※

The Tokyo Municipal Integrated Consumer Living Centre at Iidabashi, Shinjuku is an independent administrative institution, resembling Tokyo Headquarters, which is open even on Saturdays.

When Maou went to enquire about the incident regard Deluxe Life or something company, a person responsible for and qualified in consumer living consultation came immediately, giving all kinds of explanations.

The male pleasant looking consultant, introducing himself as Tamura, said that there were already a few cases enquiring about the Deluxe Life or something company, but Maou and the rest were the first ones who brought so much clear information.

“Then, we will immediately investigate this company. There is no need to worry anymore.”

Following these very humble words, the consultant known as Tamura took out a phone in front of Maou, and called a few people. And then.....

“That was dangerous, they almost got away.”

“Huh?”

“For the contents of the contract for Maou-san, it is fine as long as the contract is voided through Cooling Off, but, to be safe, the weekend consultants based in Shibuya rushed to the scene with their law enforcement partners. Then they realized they were currently packing up the agency, preparing to escape. Even a moving truck came.”

“Pack, packing up the agency.....”

Even though it was a surprising term, Tamura said this nonchalantly.

“This is a common tactic. Just taking away the computer files and other records, passing the tables and cupboards to the recycling industry to handle and escaping. To clean up one level in a mixed tenant building, building up and taking down an agency can be completed in half a day each. Other than Maou-san’s case, they must have done a lot.”

Even though it was put this way, it was still difficult for Maou to imagine.

In Maou’s eyes, the decoration of Deluxe Life or something company already looked like it was an outstanding agency.

It can be estimated that for the Japanese, who do not possess any magic, to set up and take down an agency requires a lot of manpower, but it was difficult to believe that a company conducting this standard of sales only involved this type of humans.

“For dishonest merchants, only their methods are a little despicable, they do not have a violent group behind them. Even if they do, such a simple basic level organization will be abandoned. Maou-san’s.....or more accurately, Urushihara-san’s contract seems to be located. Even though it was paid via ATM card, because it is a dishonest merchant, the payment was not processed and only written on the records. It seems like it was not passed to the bank, so it wasn’t deducted in the first place, that’s great.”

If Emi and Chiho are goddesses, in this instant, the Tamura in front of Maou was like a savior who descended upon Japan.

“However, they said some strange things, like, they wanted to escape, but the doors and windows of the company could not be opened. When the consultants rushed to the scene, the staff from the moving company were about to break the windows.”

“The door couldn’t be opened?”

Thinking about it, when Maou left that building, Suzuno had entered. It seemed like a plan of action was discussed with Emi, perhaps it was to prevent them from escaping, a sealing spell or something similar was cast.

“This company would probably receive an administrative punishment of being forced to stop their operations.....well, if we do not use suitable measures to force them to close down or not punish them, they will probably do bad things somewhere else.....”

Tamura’s gaze was stern as he looked at Maou.

“Even though Maou-san’s losses were recovered this time and the truth of the company’s evildoings was exposed, from the recent remittance fraud cases, people who take action when the victim is careless can appear any time. Until now, amongst the people who enquire about this type of company, most of them are the elderly, Maou-san is still young. It might not be that smooth sailing next time, so please be more careful in future.”

Only this time, Maou, whose actual age is more than 300 years old, did not feel repulsed at the term ‘young’.

To Maou, who only interacted with people from Ente Isla with holy magic like Emi and Suzuno, Chiho as well as his supervisor at his workplace, Kiseki, people who had respectable characters, he was shocked that Japan had humans who were filled with such evil intent and deception.

As a demon king, there were still many many things which he did not know about.

“I will remember it. Thank you so much.”

Maou bowed to show his thanks.

“Also.....”

He said the thing which had been bothering him since he came to the consumer center.

“Erhm, is there any need to pay an administrative or enquiry fee?”

Tamura shook his head with a smile.

“In the case of needing to refer a lawyer or law enforcer, the referrer would need to accept some fees, but this time it was solved by the actions of the other party, so there is no need to pay anything. Because this places operates on taxes. If you still have any questions, there’s no need to worry, you can come here to ask without any trouble.”

Even though Maou is always gloomy when having to file individual taxes, but, this is the first time he thought that taxation was great from the bottom of his heart.

※

“In the future, I want to invite that Tamura consultant into the Demon King Army.”

“Are you an idiot.”

There were in the midst of cleaning up the Demon Fortress.

Emi responded unkindly to Maou’s words.

After Maou returned home, Kuryuu, who was bought over by the Shibuya consultant, immediately took back the duvets, fire extinguisher and water purifier.

Before entering the house, and contacting with the consultant Tamura from earlier, he was praised.

“It’s alright. You were careful when confirming beforehand. Please do not forget that vigilance.”

Kuryuu, who had been so confrontational in their conversation this afternoon, seemed like a totally different person in front of the consultant, very considerate, which gave off a scary feeling instead.

The documents were also disposed of with confirmation from Maou and the others, they also protested that the newspapers were bought under forceful promotion and a person known as the Head of Operations also came to apologise, finally, the unprecedented threat to the Demon Fortress and the danger of Maou and Urushihara being killed by Ashiya disappeared.

“We’re saved! Emi, Chi-chan, Suzuno, thank you! Hey, Urushihara!”

“Aah, yeah, erhm, we’re saved wah!”

“Bow properly, you idiot!”

Maou pushed down the head of Urushiahra, who wanted to do it halfheartedly.

“There’s no need to go that far..... but, it’s great that we could help.”

Chiho was a bit flustered, but she nodded with a smile.

“Ma, nothing can be done about the fruits, so just treat it as a lesson fee.”

“Aah, seriously.”

Because the fruits only cost a few thousand yen, Maou decided to keep them as a lesson fee in being more vigilant.

“Do you want some?”

“There’s no need, they don’t look delicious.”

“I, I’ll pass as well.”

Maou wanted to promote it to the two people, but was rejected heartlessly.

“I already said so. The price doesn’t match with the quality. If you do not want to get scolded, eat it before Alsiel comes back.”

There wasn’t any choice, Maou could only listen to Suzuno’s suggestion, peeling a brandless pear and biting into it.

“Even then, why do I have to do such a thing.”

Just like what Suzuno said, Maou's mouth, stuffed with a pear with almost no moisture, mumbled this.

"What is that.....even though you're the leader of the demons.....you're that shocked about humans doing bad things?"

"Demons won't do such sinister things. In the first place, the concept of promotion isn't common, the bad things done by demons are much easier to understand, it's a straight line. This kind of....."

Kuryuu's face surfaced in Maou's mind.

"people who can smile so calmly after snatching people's money, like killing someone with a soft knife, do not exist."

"Humans aren't all kind people. After becoming an inquisitor, even if I hate it, I also understand that it's this way."

Suzuno said.

"Even so, from our standpoint, we need to treat all life equally. If that person known as Kuryuu was killed by the demons invading Ente Isla.....Kuryuu will also become a victim which should be saved. Intolerable."

She grumbled, then as if she realised something, she suddenly raised her head.

"B, but, I am not admitting that you guys understand reason and justice! Don't get me wrong!"

"I get it."

Maou smiled wryly.

"Even though everyone used to be babies at first.....what went wrong....." Chiho said in a depressed manner.

".....That, I don't know. But, there are many other people who did not do wrong. If there are companies more evil than the people from that company, there are also people are Tamura-san and the person in charge from Shibuya who watch the people in the dark world. How mysterious, the human world. The demon world is much more simple."

"Yeah, I agree with that."

Urushihara actually nodded solemnly because of Maou's words.

For dinner that night, in the name of celebrating the averting of the crisis, they used Suzuno's allowance to buy pork chop which was high rated from a meat store nearby.

On Sunday morning, Maou had to start working in the morning, he asked Urushihara to lock the door properly, and strictly ordered him to pretend that he wasn't at home, and that it's fine even if he was blatant about it.

To Chiho, who also came to work, he thanked her again, and six o'clock in the evening, he got off work with Chiho, who once again had prepared the food she made herself, and returned to the Demon Fortress.

"Oh! Ashiya, you're back!!"

"Ashiya-san, welcome back!"

Ashiya had already returned home.

"Sa, Sasaki-san?!"

Not expecting Chiho to be present, Ashiya was a little depressed, but Suzuno patted this shoulder.

"That fact that you went out to work for the 40,000 yen was already exposed. Give up."

"Ashiya-san, I'm sorry, In order to earn back to money which saved me....."

"Ah, no, I said this is....."

"It's alright. I already heard it all from Maou-san. So, at least allow me to express my gratitude to Ashiya-san and Urushihara-san."

The bento box Chiho brought over seemed to contain three roasted eels.

Chiho couldn't have caught them from the river, so it was definitely bought.

And it was obvious that it wasn't anything cheap.

"At least let me make these!"

Chiho said stubbornly, refusing to back down.

The three demons could not resist the temptation from the eel which was hard to come by.

"Oh yes, Ashiya-san, what kind of job did you do in the end?"

Because of Chiho's question, Ashiya gave a troubled expression.

“.....Shameful.....”

In a dejected and despondent manner, Ashiya started to confess.

“In a certain cram school.....”

“Cr, Cram school?”

Because of this unexpected term, Maou, Urushihara and Suzuno were a little surprised.

“I moved in with them.”

“You really did that, Ashiya-san?”

“Yes, as a lecturer.....”

“Lecturer?!”

This time, everyone was shocked.

“Even so, it's not like it's teaching in front of a blackboard. Just someone specialising in understanding and phonics.....”

“Ah, aah, that type.....”

Maou nodded in understanding.

It wasn't clear how it was for Emi, but in the first few days when they came to Japan, Maou and Ashiya used magic to grasp the Japanese language.

They thought that their knowledge in language would help them obtain a job as a full time employee, and there was a period where they studied it seriously, but Ashiya had already risen to the standard where he could use it for education.

“As a Demon General, I still have to use my own power to nurture our enemies the humans, it was difficult to endure.....a solution which could not be helped.....”

“Ma ma, it became like that after phrasing it differently?”

Suzuno was a little confused.

“Hey, Ashiya.”

“Yes.....”

“Isn’t that good?”

“.....Hah?”

Ashiya raised his head because of Maou’s unexpected words.

“I feel that as long as you are teaching, those kids will definitely not stray in the wrong direction. If there is a chance for this kind of job, I’m coming with you.”

“Huh? Hah.....ma, it probably won’t happen that often.....”

Ashiya was stunned for a while and whispered to Urushihara, who was next to him.

“Lucifer. Did something happen to Demon King-sama?”

“Huh? Isn’t he as capricious as usual?”

Of course, Urushihara didn’t entertain him. He didn’t look up, and ate the eel with his head bowed.

Even though he’s the culprit of the commotion this time, and this is the usual Urushihara who did not understand some things, even so, he suddenly raised his face, which still had rice stuck on it, and looked at Ashiya.

“Ah, but.”

“Hmm?”

“Ashiya, you’re always fighting with very capable enemies.”

“Hah?”

Ashiya was confused because he didn’t understand the background.

Seeing this situation, Maou said.

“That’s right, Chi-chan. Just like usual, we’re going to do our best for proper and decent sales!”

“Yes!”

Chiho nodded energetically towards Maou with a smile.

“Even though you’re the Demon King, why are you acting so honourably.....”

As usual, no one heard Suzuno's mumbles, and it disappeared into thin air, the dinner with demon, person of the church and human continued in a stable manner.

※

Sunday, Emi, returning from work to her condominium in Eifuku, looked at the clock while thinking that it was about the time when Alsiel returns to the Demon Fortress.

Now that she thought about it, within the people in Villa Rosa, for her to only know the number of the Demon King was a very troublesome thing.

If Suzuno was prepared to stay here for a long time, as she thought about persuading her to buy a phone while forcefully remembering that she had forgotten her stance of fighting the Demon King in the last few days, "Eh?"

The phone in the condominium rang.

"Hello?"

She nonchalantly picked up the phone and the internal phone with a video showed the hall of the condominium.

A male foreigner with a steady smile stood there.

And, he seemed to be holding a leather bound book in his hand.

And just like what she predicted, the man in the video drew in a breath.

"Do you believe in God?"

"Enough!!"

Emi screamed and put down the receiver of the internal phone.

Seriously, the Demon Fortress met with trading by coercion, and calmly conducting religious persuasion with the Hero who owned the holy sword, this country was too unpredictable.

“I’m going to take a bath.”

In order to wash away the fatigue from work and the anxiousness in her heart, Emi angrily strode towards the bathroom.

END

Short Story 2: Demon King, taking a stray kitten home

魔王、捨て猫を拾う



One day in the height of summer, the clouds were in the mood to cover the skies of Tokyo, alleviating the hot summer heat of Tokyo.

As long as the window is opened a little, the refreshing light wind flowing in would gradually cool down the room.

Even if the windows are not opened, the outside air would still come in through the gaps of the canvas covering the huge hole in the wall, but the inhabitants intentionally ignored this.

In this lonely night.

The ears of Demon General Alsiel----Ashiya Shiro, actually sensed his master's return.

The sound of the brakes of the bicycle Dullahan II used by his master, the sound of draping water resistant cloth over that bicycle, and the careful steps up the stairs in order to avoid falling down.

Ashiya straightened his posture, and walked towards the porch in order to receive his master.

After the door opened, the one who appeared there.....

“.....Demon King-sama.”

is his master who lead the Demon King Army to conquer foreign world Ente Isla in order to build a paradise for the demons----the figure of Demon King Satan, Maou Sadao.

No matter how one looked, Maou was only a human youth in his twenties, so the presence of a Demon King could not be felt at all.

However, as long as his demonic magic is restored, he would transform into a terrifying Demon King who would cause all living things to shiver.

Besides that, that Demon King who was wearing an old UNIXLO hoodie T-shirt, was actually carrying an unbelievable 'thing' in his arms.

“.....Meow----”

‘That thing’ gave a weak cry.

When Maou opened up his hoodie T-shirt, a small silver kitten was shown.

“.....”

“.....”

Master and subordinate looked at each other in front of the porch for a short while.

Then, the master, for unknown reasons tried to read the subordinate's expression while speaking gingerly,

“Be, because it was shivering at the junkyard.....”

“Please put it back to where it was originally.”

Maou did not even finish before he was immediately cut off by Ashiya.

Maou turned back to see the dark colour of night behind him and protested angrily,

“Are you a demon!”

“I am a demon, so what.”

“Ah, ah, ah, ahchoo!”

The other roommate, Fallen Angel Lucifer a.k.a Urushihara Hanzo, gave a huge sneeze, causing the kitten in Maou’s arms to jolt once in fright.

※

The next morning, the Doctrinal Correction Council Inquisitor of the Ente Isla Church----living next to the Demon Fortress, Villa Rosa Sasazuka room 201, Crestia Bell a.k.a Kamazuki Suzuno, woke up because she heard an abnormal foreign sound.

“.....What is going on?”

An animal’s cry was heard nearby, and it might just be the sound of a cat.

In these times, it is rare to find apartments which has a backyard and is surrounded by four walls like Villa Rosa Sasazuka, so stray cats will occasionally pass by.

But ever since Suzuno started living here, she had never seen cats get into fights near the apartment, perhaps cats did not like the weeds in the backyard so Suzuno had never been troubled by stray cat droppings.

“.....?”

Suzuno left her futon, changed into a Yukata which can be used for casual clothing, however even when she folded her futon and prepared to make breakfast, the cat's cry had not stopped.

She tried to poke her head out of the window, but she did not see any signs of a cat within field of vision.

Could it be that out of season stray cats have given birth of kittens in a place which cannot be seen.

At this time----

“Bell? It's me, my apologies for disturbing you this early.”

Someone knocked on the porch door and Suzuno heard a familiar voice from outside.

“Emilia? Is something wrong?”

Suzuno used her apron to wipe her hands while walking out.

“Sorry, coming here so early. I have something to give you.”

“Something for me?”

Hugging a paper bag, Ente Isla Hero Emilia Justina a.k.a Yusa Emi, was standing there.

“I received additional holy magic drinks from Em, so I want to give some to you.”

“Sorry to trouble you.”

Even if Emi and Suzuno depended on spells to overcome many dangers, the two of them were unable to replenish the energy source of the spells in Japan----holy magic.

Thanks to Emi’s former travel companion Emerada Etuva, she was occasionally send the drink which can replenish holy magic ‘Holy Vitamin β ’, Emi and Suzuno were currently able to carry out their activities safely.

“Are you going to work after this?”

“No.....”

Emi looked towards the door of the neighbouring room in a worried manner.

“Today is the day which Alas=Ramus is supposed to go out and play with ‘Papa’.”

“.....”

Suzuno became speechless after hearing this, and at the same time, discovered that the key person was not here.

“Then where is Alas=Ramus?”

“.....Because she woke up too early from being overexcited, she is sleeping now.”

While speaking, Emi pointed to her own head.

Hero Emilia's holy sword was currently merged with Alas=Ramus, and the latter was an orb used to form the world which was located in Ente Isla Heaven----one of the fragments of 'Sephirah', an existence which personified into a child.

For unknown reasons, Alas=Ramus strongly believed that the Hero and Demon King are her own “Mama” and “Papa”.

As Alas=Ramus, who could not stay beyond a certain distance apart after merging with Emi, liked 'Papa' a lot, Emi had no choice but to visit the Demon Fortress periodically for the sake of her 'daughter'.

After all, as long as Alas=Ramus threw a tantrum in their merged status, Emi will feel very troubled because of the cries which could only be heard by her.

Even though the merged state is very convenient, but recently, Emi started to feel that it might be easier on her if she undid the merged state to take care of a young child.

Suzuno could not help but pity Emi who had to deal with the Demon King like a single mother after a mediated divorce.

“Ah choo!”

““?””

At this moment, a clear and loud sneeze caused Suzuno and Emi to flinch in shock.

“.....That was Lucifer’s voice just now right?”

Emi frowned because of the sneeze which broke the refreshing morning atmosphere.

“It seems to be very noisy over there, did something happen?”

The neighbour of Villa Rosa Sasazuka room 201, had a big hole in it because of a commotion revolving around Alas=Ramus, even though it was currently covered by a plastic sheet, the voices from within could still transmit out, and it seemed to be especially noisy today.

“Who knows, it’s been like this from morning. Could it be a cold because last night was too chilly?”

Even though this does not resemble a conversation between a Hero and an Inquisitor when talking about the Demon Fortress, the next sound heard really caused the both of them to widen their eyes in surprise.

“Meow!”

“Eh?”

It was the cat cry which Suzuno had heard ever since she got out of bed. During the period of time when the two people were unable to grasp the situation, the commotion within the Demon Fortress became more dramatic.

“Ah! It ran away! Urushihara! Grab it!”

“That’s impossible! H, hey, don’t come over! Ah, ah, ah-choo!”

“Damn, damn it, it’s only a small animal, actually daring to resist! Behave!”

Continuous tremendous noise from the Demon King, Demon General and Fallen angel could be heard from next door.

“Meow, meow, meow!”

“W, what are they so noisy about?”

Even though it was not known why there was a cat in the Demon Fortress, but deducing from the sounds heard, Maou and the others seemed to be flustered greatly by the mysterious cat.

A short time later----

“Hah, hah! Finally caught up! Just give in quietly.”

“Blame, blame in on yourself for resisting.....”

“Anything is fine, think of a way to get rid of that guy! Ah, ah, ah-choo!”

Such dangerous sounding voices were heard from within the house.

“Could, could it be!”

The demons' tone, caused Emi and Suzuno to exchange looks with one another because they have thought of my possibility.

Right now, the economic status of Maou and the others, is so poor that it was difficult to imagine that they were the Demon King Army who have ruled Suzuno's hometown----the whole of Ente Isla.

Even though these demons were able to obey Japan's rules, and worked to earn money and feed themselves, the life they had now could not be called comfortable at all.

Could it be that Maou and the others have finally decided to break the taboo.

In other words, they planned to capture wild animals to stave their hunger. An image started to surface in Suzuno's mind which in some way, really suited the impression of a demon.

From the economic situation of the Demon Fortress, they would definitely not do something as reckless as taking in a pet, and furthermore, until yesterday, Suzuno did not see any signs of such a thing.

An bloody image of Maou in his demon form eating the cat headfirst flashed across Emi and Suzuno's mind, and in the next instant, the two of them started to act.

“Demon King!”

Suzuno stood in front of the neighbouring room 201 and shouted and pulled off her hairclip to cast a spell----Holy Metal Hammer.

Immediately following that, Suzuno's glass hairclip instantly changed into a giant hammer strong enough to smash the supporting pillars of Villa Rosa Sasazuka into smithereens.

"Suzu, Suzuno?"

From Maou's voice, he seemed to have heard Suzuno's shout.

"Demon King, open his door quickly! Your actions are unforgivable! Actually capturing a stray cat for food, can you still be called a Demon King like this?"

"W, what! You're speaking too loud....."

"Open the door quickly! Let the cat go!"

Suzuno did not listen to Maou's explanation at all, and turned the doorknob directly, but obviously, it was locked.

"Bell! I'm going to enter your room!"

In contrast, Emi entered Suzuno's room, and went outside through the window.

It looks like she wants to break into the Demon Fortress from outside.

From how society is now, if anyone who passed by called the police because they saw this, she would be unable to explain herself.

"Tenchu!"

Emi gave a dangerous shout and beautifully jumped into the Demon Fortress from the outside window.

“Wah? Eh, Emi? Where did you come from?”

The one standing in front of Emi, was Maou Sadao carrying a kitten.

“Cut with the nonsense! Actually catching a stray kitten to eat, can you still be considered the Demon King? It’s disgraceful!”

Just as Emi raised the sword of justice and breathed in once to stop the barbaric actions of Maou and the others, she finally discovered it.

“I know all of you have a serious misunderstanding! But this guy finally settled down! Please be quieter!”

Emi originally thought that the Demons were preparing to chop the kitten into pieces.

However what she saw was Maou trying to open the kitten’s mouth with a dropper in his hand, Ashiya busily cleaning up the white powder giving off a fragrant smell split on the floor, and Urushihara curled up in the corner of the room with a red nose and tears streaming down his face.

“.....What is.....going on.....”

Emi, who did not understand the situation, was still speaking when----

“You still don’t know after seeing this?”

Ashiya, using a wet cloth to wipe the white powder, shouted angrily.

“Uh, erhm.....”

Emi froze on the spot with the holy sword raised.

“It looks like when planning to feed the kitten milk, the kitten which resisted knocked over the milk powder and ran around, so all of you grabbed it and planned to force it to drink.....something like that.”

After analysing the scene in front of her in detail, Emi believed that her deduction was correct.

“Leave it you know already! We don’t have the time to bother about you!”

“Ashiya, don’t be so loud! What if you scare it again.....oh, it’s finally willing to drink.”

The silver kitten in Maou’s arms, finally took the dropper in its mouth like it had given up.

“That’s right, if you drank obediently from the beginning, there’s no need to be afraid! Seriously.....”

Even though his words were spiteful, Maou still carefully gripped the dropper, preventing the milk from dripping down the corners of the kitten’s mouth.

“Alright, since you’re done drinking, then go back!”

After saying this, Maou put the cat back into the large cardboard box in the corner of the room.

“W, where did the kitten come from? You guys really never planned to eat it?”

“You.....what do you see us as.”

“Demons right.”

“Yeah demons.”

“Ah choo!”

One of the other demons, let out another shocking huge sneeze.

“Emilia! Emilia, are you alright! What happened! Hey!”

“.....”

Suzuno banged on the door from the porch outside, if they ignore her, she might just break the door down to enter.

“.....Seriously, like this early in the morning.”

Just as Maou prepared to open the door while mumbling----

“De, Demon King-sama, over there isn’t.....!”

Ashiya's warning was of no use, Maou had already stepped on the milk powder which could not be wiped away in time.

In order to convince Suzuno, who was looking at him suspiciously, Maou started to explain the events of the night before.

“With a night as cold as yesterday, if that little thing is left outside and ignored, it might just freeze to death. There weren't any other people around, taking it home is human nature right. Ne, Alas=Ramus.”

“Meow meow!”

Maou made eye contact with Alas=Ramus sitting on Emi's well defined legs.

Even though Alas=Ramus was woken up because Emi waved the holy sword around, once she saw the kitten, the displeasure she felt at being woke up was thrown to the back of her mind.

“Meow meow! Meow? I want to see.”

Emi pushed Alas=Ramus, who asked to see the kitten, back onto her legs.

If a child, who does not know how to control their own strength, is allowed to play with that kitten, it might injure the kitten, conversely, the child might also get hurt from a counterattack.

“Something like human nature, shouldn't be said by a Demon King such as yourself right.”

Emi placated Alas=Ramus, who was sitting on her legs and kept wanting to approach the kitten, and frowned in an obvious manner.

“But.....that’s true. With that kind of situation, it really can’t be helped.”

After changing the huge hammer back into a hairclip and putting it back into her hair with smooth movements, Suzuno peered into the cardboard box.

Within the simple bed of an old towel, a silver ball of fur moved its short legs, sniffing around inside the box.

Not knowing what it was bothered by, the kitten knocked into the corner of the box with its nose, then stared at the sky which had nothing in it, even though it was unpredictable, its actions are really too cute.

“Suzuno, your mouth is open.”

“Ah!”

Suzuno, immersed in her watching, came to her senses and raised her head.

“Hmph, actually showing such an idiotic un-Inquisitor-like expression. You’re the same level as Alas=Ramus.”

The blushing Suzuno ignored Ashiya’s ridicule as he finally cleaned up the milk powder on the floor, and said to Maou in an intentionally low threatening voice,

“Anyway, we know that you’re not planning to eat cute animals.”

“Oi.”

“Papa, don’t eat the meow meow!”

Alas=Ramus’s stern expression caused Maou to say dejectedly,

“See, you made Alas=Ramus form some weird misunderstanding.”

“.....Sorry. But.....”

After pausing, Suzuno surveyed the interior of the Demon Fortress which was quite similar to her room.

“What do you plan to do from now on. Villa Rosa Sasazuka prohibits pets right.”

“About this.....”

Maou scratched in head in a troubled manner because of what Suzuno pointed out.

Honestly, this was also the main point of conflict between Ashiya, who wanted to put the kitten back where it was found, and Maou.

Even if it is so liberal such as there is no deposit, gift money or management fee, and also does not charge fees for renewal of facilities, and to the point that the landlady was often not at Villa Rosa Sasazuka, within the contract, like normal rental apartments, there was a clause where ‘pets are forbidden’.

Normally for the ‘forbidding of pets’, the landlord has a great amount of discretion, even though some places allow small birds or insects, basically anything which can make noise and therefore affect the lives of other residents, or any animals which can damage the current state of the building is forbidden.

And cats having the habit of using the pillars of houses to grind their claws are a well-known fact.

“But there whereabouts of the landlady is unknown now right? Even if we keep it for the time being.....”

Emi instigated Maou with words which did not seem to very Hero-like, but the latter used his chin to gesture at the hole in the wall in a troubled manner.

“Recently, because of the hole, I looked for the agent a few times.”

“Ah.....”

If serious damage occurred in a tenant’s house, then the management company and landlady may come over anytime.

In addition, before that, as the current life of the Demon Fortress was mostly due to the landlady’s goodwill, they cannot go against the contract terms and betray the landlady’s trust.

“And there is still that guy’s problem.”

“That guy’s problem?”

Maou pointed towards the closet of the Demon Fortress.

At this moment, Emi and Suzuno finally realised that Urushihara could not be seen since earlier.

“That’s right, our house already has a noisy rice bucket here. If that guy becomes noisier, we won’t be able to withstand it.”

Ashiya said with a very troubled face.

“.....Ah choo!”

Following that, a suppressed sneeze was heard from within the closet.

“Urushihara seems to be allergic to cats.

“Ah?”

Then, the sneezes which were continuously heard today, unexpectedly, the reason was because of allergies.

“Demons can be allergic as well?”

Suzuno asked in an interested manner.

“You know about allergies as well?”

“Don’t underestimate me. The hospitals of the Churches are already researching this as part of epidemiology early on. After all, anaphylactic shock from bee allergies often occur in Ente Isla.”

Emi even added on,

“In other words, if Lucifer wants to cause trouble later on, we can just find a cat and get close to him right.”

“Stop joking!”

Urushihara protested against Emi’s cruel proposal with all his might.

“Stop that, it’s really very uncomfortable.”

Emi picked up the cardboard box and moved it closer to the closet, taking care not to scare the kitten, but Maou gently stopped her.

“Sigh, anyway, that’s how things are, so we cannot take care of it. However, the landlady isn’t cold hearted, if it’s just taking care of it before we find an owner, we should still be forgiven even if we are found out.”

“Compared to getting into good graces with the landlady who can’t even be seen, why don’t you be more concerned by my health! Cough cough cough!”

Maou openly ignored the protests coming from the closet.

“That’s how it is, can you think of anyone who can take it in?”

“.....how is that possible.”

Suddenly being asked this, Suzuno momentarily became stone faced.

After that Maou looked towards Emi instead, but the latter also frowned, tilted her head and said,

“You should know I also live in a condominium, so I can’t take care of pets.”

The condominium which Emi rented was at Eifuku, three stations away from Sasazuka.

“Of course I know that, but you’re a part of the working class after all. Don’t you have any colleagues or friends who can take it in?”

Even though she is more of a Hero rather than part of the working class, Emi’s expression did not change.

“I think you shouldn’t harbour any expectations.”

“Seriously.....when I start working, let me try ask other people.”

Emi listened to Maou’s complaining, sighed and said,

“But even though it has such beautiful silver fur, and it’s already so big..... actually throwing it away, it’s really too much.”

“Yeah.”

Maou nodded and replied.

Because I saw it shivering alone, I can’t just ignore it.”

“Eh?”

“Ah, no, it’s nothing.”

Once Emi questioned in return, Maou shook his head frantically for unknown reasons.

After that, in order to pass it as nothing, he clapped his hands together and said to Suzuno,

“That’s how things are, we might be very noisy during this period, please be understanding.”

“It’s not as if all of you were this noisy only today.”

“I want to touch the meow meow!”

At this moment, Alas=Ramus, who had reached the limit of her patience, started to kick.

“Hey, let her touch a bit!”

“Okay okay. But from this, she might just stick to that kitten the whole day.”

After letting go of Alas=Ramus, Maou and Emi tensed up, paying attention so she would not do anything too vigorous to the kitten.

Ashiya and Suzuno, who watched the three people from behind----

“.....Don’t say anything.”

“They look like a peaceful family no matter how you look at it.”

“So didn’t I tell you not to say anything?”

Demon and human, could only quarrel about these meaningless things.

※

The next day.

“How mean, actually throwing the kitten away.”

A junior at the McDonalds in front of Hatagaya station where Maou works at---high school girl Sasaki Chiho, said this angrily as she stood next to the bicycle which Maou was pushing.

Chiho is the only Japanese person who knows the truth about Maou, Emi and Ente Isla, after she got off work, she headed for the Demon Fortress together with Maou.

Besides wanting to see the kitten, Chiho also wanted to try finding an area where she could help in.

“At that time, I was also flustered because I suddenly encountered this.”

Maou sighed deeply.

“Even though I felt that there is a slight problem with the me would brought the abandoned kitten back home under those circumstances, it would be better than leaving it there at the junkyard.”

“Ah haha.....”

After reaching the apartment, Maou gave a long sigh.

Chiho looked up at the hole someone forcefully covered with a plastic sheet and forced out a laugh.

After walking up the stairs and opening the porch door of the Demon Fortress----

“Oh. I’m back.....eh?”

Maou, after seeing the interior of the room and discovered that no one is answering him, said in confusion,

“Strange, there’s nobody.”

Chiho also looked over Maou’s shoulder and discovered that the Demon Fortress was totally quiet.

“.....Ashiya went out to buy things.”

“Kya!”

Suddenly hearing a voice from an empty room, Chiho had a fright----and of course, that was Urushihara’s voice from the cupboard.

“Buy things? Then the kitten?”

“I zon’t know. He seemed to have zaid something to Bell.”

“Urushi, Urushihara-san, do you have a cold?”

Chiho was worried for Urushihara’s serious nasal voice.

Just at this time----

“Demon King-sama, ah, Sasaki-san is here too.”

The main subject of the conversation, Ashiya, came back carrying bags from the supermarket.

“Ashiya-san, hello.”

“Are you here to see the kitten?”

Chiho nodded in response to Ashiya’s question.

“Perhaps someone from my friends at school wants to take it in.”

“I see.....Demon King-sama, my apologies, because I had to go out to buy things, I left the kitten with Bell.”

“What, so that’s what happened.”

Urushihara, who is allergic to cats, did not want to approach the kitten, if so, if Ashiya went out and left the kitten at home alone, it was difficult to guarantee that the cat would not get injured or destroy the room.

“Then hurry and bring it back. We already borrow Suzuno’s place every day to eat, I don’t want to owe her more favours.”

“Understood.”

After Ashiya placed the shopping bags into the room, he knocked on the door of room 201, where Suzuno lived.

“Bell, it’s me. I came to get the kitten.”

“.....?”

However, no matter how he waited, no one replied.

“What happened?”

“Is Suzuno-san taking a nap?”

“No, I only left for 30 minutes or so, it shouldn’t reach that stage.....hm?”

Looking carefully, Suzuno actually carelessly forgot to close the door.

Even though Suzuno can do anything she wants, it would be bad if the kitten ran out.

“Bell, I’m coming in. I’m taking the kitten.....”

After Ashiya knocked the door once, he opened the door directly.

Then----

“.....”

“Meow, meow, meow, how soft.”

What appeared in front of the three people is----

“.....”

“Tsun tsun tsun tsun.”

was Suzuno with irregular breathing, repeatedly touching the kitten’s stomach and paw pads with a serious expression.

“Suzu, Suzuno-san?”

“.....ah!”

Suzuno, who was about to pick up the kitten and play with its throat, came back to her senses the instant she heard Chiho’s voice, and once she discovered Chiho, Maou and Ashiya’s presences, she instantly turned red, totally unrelated to the evening sun.

“Ah, n, no! I, I.....”

“Meow?”

Even though Suzuno frantically put the kitten back into the box, and intentionally straightened her yukata and turned away----

“Suzuno, there is cat fur all over your yukata sleeves.”

“Wh, wh, wh, wh, wh, wha, wha, wha.....”

But Maou pointed to Suzuno’s sleeves, which obviously had large amounts of silver cat fur on them.

“W, w, wr, wr, wr, wr, wrong, th, th, th, th, this is! Erhm!”

“Do you like cats that much.....”

“I have already returned it to you!”

The room door closed with a loud bang, and Maou, carrying the box holding the kitten, was chased into the public corridor.”

“Wah! It’s so cute!”

Once Chiho saw the silver kitten sleeping along the inner edge of the box with a twitching nose, Chiho let out a soft cheer.

“It’s really silver, it’s fur is so pretty.”

Other than Chiho, Maou also looked for all the employees working at the Hatagaya station MgRonalds to discuss about helping the kitty find an owner.



Even though Maou originally thought that he would not be able to find a person who can adopt it immediately, including Kisaki and his junior Chi-chan, everyone looked troubled once they heard the topic of adoption.

Because most of the employees at Hatagaya live alone in multi-unit apartments.

“Sigh.....if only my father wasn’t allergic to cats.....”

After seeing the kitten for a while, Chiho sighed in regret.

Chiho’s landed property home was quite a good environment for taking care of cats, but Chiho’s father Sasaki Senichi, like Urushihara, was seriously allergic to cats.

“No one knows who its previous owner was?”

“Even if it’s known, I do not wish to let it go back to the home which abandons cats.”

“That’s true.....ah, how cute.”

Chiho’s smile had not disappeared since the beginning.

The evening sun shining into the Demon Fortress reflected off the kitten’s body in a golden glow.

“Hm?”

At this moment, Ashiya, who was in the kitchen, hearing knocking on the door.

“Alsiel.”

“What is it, cat lover?”

It was Suzuno’s voice, and Ashiya, in a rare moment, teased her a little.

“From today onwards, you guys can cook here by yourselves.”

Suzuno replied from outside in a low voice.

“.....Emilia and Alas=Ramus are here.”

“.....Wait a moment, I’ll open the door immediately.”

Even though Ashiya frowned from hearing Suzuno’s voice from the public corridor, he still unlocked the porch door.

Even this scene of a demon appearing to nonchalantly invite the Hero and Inquisitor into his home, has slowly become a part of normal life.

“Meow meow!”

Appearing in front of the door was Emi, who looked like she just got off from work, and Alas=Ramus, being carried by Emi.

“Even when I was working, she was still thinking about the kitten, and kept shouting ‘meow meow’ continuously.....”

After saying an excuse which lacked the usual domineering air, Emi walked into the Demon Fortress.

“Oh, Alas=Ramus. Emi, you need to ask her to be quieter. Because the kitten is sleeping now.”

In some sense, it was normal for Maou to make such a reminder, but for them, this should be considered abnormal.

But Emi did not particularly rebuke this.

“You have to shhh-----oh?”

Once Emi asked Alas=Ramus to be quiet, the young girl obediently imitated Emi and raised her index finger in front of her mouth, and her middle finger raised together because of this as well.

“Meow meow is sleeping, you have to quietly watch it okay.”

“Yeah! Shh-----oh?”

Even though it was not known how much the young girl understands, in the end, Chiho and Emi moved aside so Alas=Ramus could see the kitten.

“Meow meow, is sleeping?”

After Alas=Ramus examined the inside of the box, she looked up and asked Emi.

“That’s right. You can’t wake it up.”

Maou asked Emi, who had instructed Alas=Ramus once more,

“At your workplace, are there girls who like cats?”

“I asked around, but basically, everyone lives in a condominium, they can’t raise one even if they wanted to. Even though I haven’t asked everyone yet that is.”

Emi’s job is answering calls at the customer service centre of the mobile phone company Docodemo.

“Is that so.”

Maou hung his head, discouraged, and looked towards everyone who had squeezed into the 6 tatami Demon Fortress.

“Sigh, there is a limit to asking one of us after all.”

“.....Hey, who is ‘one of us’.”

Once she realised that ‘one of us’ Maou was referring to included her, Emi’s tone became stern.

“Why does it matter, don’t sweat the small stuff.”

“What small stuff.....”

Even though Emi still wanted to protest, once she considered Alas=Ramus and the sleeping kitten, she still exerted her self-control and suppressed her anger.

“.....So, what do you plan to do? If no one wants to adopt it, you’re going to continue raising it?”

“Because it can’t be done, that’s why I’m so troubled.”

Maou mumbled softly.

Seeing Maou so undecided, Emi sighed lightly.

“Since ‘one of us’ is no good, then it’s fine to ask other people.”

“Ah?”

“Even though I feel that this is an old method! But when I still stayed in my hometown in Ente Isla, I always see people posting notices at the village church or the house of the village chief.”

Maou looked up in surprise.

“Posting notices.....”

“I see.....as long as it is posted in a prominent place, perhaps it might attract the attention of the people passing by.”

In a rare moment, Ashiya agreed with Emi’s suggestion.

“I thought so as well, so I tried to make it.”

“Kya!”

A hand suddenly stretched out from within the closet, causing Emi to shout out in surprise.

Even though Emi immediately discovered that was Urushihara’s hand, the scene of a hand holding a piece of paper suddenly appearing from the closet in an apartment room under the evening sun, it still looks very chilling.

“Lu, Lucifer? Don’t scare people like that!”

Urushihara threw out the piece of paper in his hand and closed the closet door immediately.

After Chiho picked up the piece of paper, she discovered that it was a simple flyer made from a word processor with photos of the kitten taken with a digital camera on it.

“When did you buy a digital camera and printer?”

Emi looked towards Maou coldly.

“Oh, because I want to use various ways to keep Alas=Ramus’s photos. And it was being sold cheaply at that time.”

“With an old model like this, it would be a rip off if it’s not sold at a cheaper price.”

Maou said happily, but Urushihara, in his closet, rebuked this mercilessly.

Besides that, Emi wanted even more to complain that since they had money to buy such things, why did they not buy a futon set for Alas=Ramus when she was staying at the Demon Fortress.

But before Emi could open her mouth----

“Erhm.....”

Chiho asked Maou in a troubled manner,

“May I know what this ‘Ginshari’ means?”

(T/N: Ginshari is a term to refer to white rice in Japan.)

“Eh?”

Chiho passed the flyer to Maou, and when the latter examined it carefully, it discovered that the photos had the words ‘Name: Ginshari’ added next to them.

“This is what I thought of with Urushihara today.”

“.....Spend more effort thinking about it! That is a cat.”

Now even Maou felt weak at Ashiya’s confession, but Ashiya answered seriously,

“Even though we don’t know how long we’re going to take care of it, but in order to prevent the issue of keeping the kitten from being found out by the landlady or agent, we have to be careful. Rather than saying it’s a name, this is more of the kitten’s codename.”

“That means it’s a name.”

Emi rebuked softly.

Since everyone has already asked other people if they could adopt it, it feels like there was no meaning even if they gave it a codename, but just as Maou started to feel that calling it ‘cat’ did seem rather inconvenient----

“Sigh, anyway, let’s ignore the name Ginshari first. This method is quite good, as long as we add one photo and attach our phone number, and indicate that we are looking for someone to adopt it.....”

Even if it was a flyer made using a simple computer and printer, the layout was simple and easy to understand, and it looked it was not as if it could not be used.

Even though it being Emi and Urushihara’s idea made it a little unpleasant, but with things as they are, they could not be picky.

However----

“But.....where should this be posted?”

Chiho looked between Maou and the flyer with a complex expression on her face, and objected against the location which everyone present was thinking.

“Where.....can’t it be pasted on the telephone pole?”

“That’s what I originally thought.....but it seems quite wrong, after all I rarely see someone pasting help notices on lost pets.”

Emi, who did not expect Chiho to object, could not help but say this.

“Actually, that cannot be done.”

Chiho said very apologetically.

“To put it in a more extreme manner, if notices of this type are pasted on the telephone pole, it might lead to a destruction of property offence. Especially Tokyo places a lot of restrictions on notices on telephone poles, so it’s really strictly prohibited in life safety lessons.....”

B, but it’s only pasting notices for looking for pets.....it would lead to destruction of property offence?”

This unexpected fact, cause Maou, Emi and Ashiya to be greatly surprised.

“Of course, if it’s just a notice for looking for pets, at most, it would be torn off by the police, or a verbal warning.....but my dad said before, compared to the illegal nature of posting notices, it is difficult to guard against the trouble caused by publicising telephone numbers.”

“.....Ah.....I see.”

If it's just a prank call, it wouldn't be so bad, but it was said that because of this, money scams have occurred related to missing pets, attract stalkers, or thieves and burglaries.

“If notices have to be posted, then only Maou-san's number can be posted right? If so, it might attract strange businesses like last time, I think it would be better not to do such a thing.”

“Last time? Business? What is that supposed to mean?”

“I, I understand! Yeah, Chi-chan is correct! We shouldn't paste notices! Yeah, give it up!”

When Suzuno just came, Urushihara had been scammed by a visiting merchant when Ashiya went out, and bought unnecessary things.

Seeing that this incident, which had been secretly taken care of, was going to rise to the surface, Maou frantically shouted out.

“Er, erhm, even though Urushihara-san specially made a flyer, I actually spoilt it for everyone.....I'm really sorry.”

From Chiho's expression, she seemed to regret her model student like words.

“It's alright, it's alright. Chi-chan is right. It's me who is too careless for wanting to publicise my number without thinking too much about it.”

Maou folded up the flyer with a wry smile, and threw it into the dustbin.

“Sigh.....and I specially posted a topic on a pet related electronic board on the internet.....wah!”

Ashiya hit the door a few times, causing the complaints within the cupboard to quiet down.

“That’s true.....this isn’t a village like my old home. Because ever since I came here, I have always met up with good people, making me forget that this world actually has all kinds of people.”

Even though Emi also agreed to Chiho’s words, her opinion caused Suzuno standing next to her to widen her eyes.

“Emilia?”

“Hm? Is something wrong?”

“.....Ah, no, it’s nothing.”

As Emi replied very naturally, therefore Suzuno could not continue with this line of questioning.

“With this, we can only steadily find someone to take it in.”

After Emi said this, she picked up Alas=Ramus, who did not grow tired to staring at ‘Ginshari’ at all.

“Ah-um, I still want, see meow meow!”

“You’re going back?”

“Because I still have to go to work tomorrow. I will help you ask my colleagues, but don’t expect too much.”

“.....Oh, erhm, thanks.”

“Then, Chiho, I’m going back first.”

“Meow meow bye bye! Bye bye!”

“Ah, yeah, thank you for the help.”

“.....And, Demon King.”

“What is it.”

After Emi looked at Maou and ‘Ginshari’, she said softly,

“It’s said that even if you only looked after it for one or two days and feed it, feelings will still develop, And you guys actually even gave it a name, if you feel depressed after finding it an owner, I won’t be bothered.”

“.....Ah?”

“Then, that’s it.”

Emi took Alas=Ramus and left quickly.

“What’s up with her?”

Maou tilted his head, thinking, but Chiho seemed to understand Emi's words and looked over with a worried gaze.

Chiho was worried that if the kitten they had taken care of left, Maou might just fall into depression like the time when he did not know that Alas=Ramus had merged with Emi.

“Maou-san, even if you find a new owner, please do not feel depressed, okay.”

“E, even Chi-chan says so?”

“Meow.”

As if it was responding to Maou's mumbles, a cat's cry was heard from the box.

“What exactly is going on. Ginshari, do you know?”

In this instant, the name of the kitten which was brought back was confirmed to be Ginshari.

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Three days passed after that.

Maou and the others are already at their wit's end.

Even though Emi and Chiho tried their best to ask their friends, they did not get a good response.

“I even asked the people in the community, but it’s still no good.....what can be done.....”

As a last resort, Maou even sincerely asked the seller of his prized steed---- the bicycle Dullahan II, the bicycle shop owner Hirose, and the regular customers of MgRonalds who are also residents of the community Watanabe-san and the others, but the results are still the same.

If this goes on, they might really have to continue hiding this from the landlady and take care of Ginshari.

“Just let me off already!”

Urushihara’s cries from within the closet has already reached the limit.

His allergy symptoms grew worse every day.

Even though it was only sneezing at the beginning, but since yesterday, not only did he show symptoms of coughing and nose blockage, even his skin started to become rough, if this goes on, it might end up being really serious.

“Meow.....”

Perhaps it was his imagination, but Ginshari’s meows seemed to become listless.

Maou looked at Ginshari inside the box.

At this moment, he suddenly felt that perhaps like what Ashiya said, putting the kitten back to its original location, might be better.

Even if they did not know beforehand, but a place with family members allergic to cats, is really not a good environment for raising a cat.

With Ginshari's rare fur colour, if it is a person who can really take care of cats, they would definitely take it home without any hesitation.

However on the other hand, the temperature that day was extremely low.

Maou discovered it in the middle of the night on a road where nobody was around, and in Maou's eyes at that time, the kitten, giving out weak cries, seemed like it was going to die anytime.

Maou also knew that for the king of Demons like him actually worrying about the safety of an abandoned cat, was really a strange thing.

If the person who passed by that time was Ashiya or Urushihara, they might just leave it alone, and Maou might probably not berate them for it.

But----

“I'm really too naïve.....actually thinking that as long as I do something of this standard, I would be able to get closer to that person.”

Maou overlapped Ginshari's figure with his past self----the him who, without knowing anything, had been thrown away like a torn piece of cloth and could only wait for death.

“Demon King-sama? Did you say anything just now?”

At this time, Ashiya, who went to Suzuno’s room to boil water to prepare milk for Ginshari, had returned, therefore Maou shook his head in reply.

Ashiya was already very used to feeding Ginshari milk, and he was seen picking up the kitten lightly in a way which it would naturally open up its mouth----

“Alright, Ginshari, time to eat.”

He talked to Ginshari and moved the dropper close to its mouth.

“.....Ginshari?”

“Hm, is something wrong?”

Maou approached in concern because Ashiya’s tone held some surprise.

“Uh, it’s not willing to drink milk for some reason.....Ginshari, it’ll get cold that way. Drink quickly.....”

“H, hey, Ashiya!”

Maou, observing Ashiya feeding the milk, grabbed Ashiya’s shoulder when he discovered Ginshari’s strange condition.

“Is, is it shivering?”

“R, right.....let’s put it back in the box first.”

Ashiya cut off the action of feeding milk, and put Ginshari back into the cupboard box----

“Gin, Ginshari!”

However after walking two or three shaky steps in the box, Ginshari slumped down weakly.

“Meow.....”

“Eh?”

Maou groaned.

Ginshari actually defecated in this slumped down posture.

And its stools was filled with water, and was not solid like yesterday.

“Hey hey hey, Ashiya, it, it’s doesn’t look good?”

“Is, is it diarrhoea? But I should have fed it milk suitably adjusted to human temperature.....”

“.....yeah.....”

““Wah!””

This time Maou and Ashiya freaked out.

Ginshari actually spit out a small mass of unknown origin.

“W,w,wh,what, it threw up?”

“I, I shouldn’t have fed it any strange things?”

Not only did Ginshari had a stomach upset, it even threw up a mystery object.

“W, w, what should we do? I, it can’t be saved after all? Did it catch a cold on the day I took it back home?”

Ginshari, who showed his situation for the first time, caused the Demon King and Demon General to panic.

“Ah choo!”

““Yah!””

Maou and Ashiya jumped because of an exaggerated sounding sneeze.

The two of them turned to the source of the sound, and discovered that the sliding door of the closet was slightly open.

“Urushi, Urushihara?”

“Don’t scare people, idiot!”

“.....Ib zay (I say).....”

Urushihara, whose pronunciation was affected from the nose blockage, held out a piece of paper with information printed on it from the gap in the closet.

“It’s useless even if both of ‘ou panicked. Go find a professional.”

After Urushihara said this, he threw the paper into the room, and closed the sliding door quickly.

After Maou picked up the paper----

“.....Aurora Animal Clinic?”

and discovered that the map of a nearby animal hospital was printed on it.

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“Alright, we will undergo some checks, please wait a while.”

Maou handed the box containing Ginshari to the nurse at the counter, and sat on the bench in the clinic with a frail look on his face.

Even though Maou had never paid attention to animal hospitals, once he saw the map Urushihara printed, he discovered that there were a few animal hospitals near the Demon Fortress.

After dialling the number of one of them and explaining Ginshari’s condition, as the other party said they could diagnose it immediately, Maou carefully put the box containing Ginshari onto Dullahan II, and quickly rushed to Aurora Animal Clinic.

From the counter, various animals in the clinic could be seen.

Other than the commonly seen cats, dogs and birds, even the less commonly seen chameleon could be seen.

As the waiting area used warm coloured fashionable decorations, it did not feel like a hospital at all.

The shelf providing reading materials for the customers was naturally filled with many magazines.

Even though Maou picked up a cat magazine and flipped a few pages, he could not process the content at all.

Even though he occasionally tried to peek into the consultation room, the interior could not be seen from the waiting area.

The billboard, besides asking owners to vaccinate their dogs from rabies, and promotions for new medicines, it also pasted advertisements for the newest pet products, a specialised area which Maou had never come into contact with.

Amongst this information, a photo of a dog grabbed Maou's attention.

“Found a great adopter.....?”

It was a notification that a puppy born at the home of the hospital staff had already found an adopter.

The photo only had a large sized dog nursing a few puppies, and on it was even handwritten words of every puppy's name and the words 'Found a home!'.

Just as Maou was attentively looking at these advertisements----

“Maou-san, please come in.”

A stout bespectacled man poked his head out from the consultation room and invited Maou in.

Maou looked up suddenly, and ran into the consultation room like he wanted to break in.

“Ginshari! Uh.....eh?”

On the platform where the patients are placed, Ginshari was energetically eating something which resembled pet food in large gulps.

“Eh.....?”

“Sigh, as you see, it's very lively.”

Even though it had entered the consultation room less than 20 minutes ago, Ginshari could already steadily stand on its own feet in front of the feeding bowl.

The man wearing the nameplate 'Veterinarian: Yoshimura', asked Maou to sit down.

“Please sit. Even though it looks fine now, but bringing it here is the right decision.”

“Is, is that so.....”

Veterinarian Yoshimura asked Maou while looking at the medical history table,

“Even though it’s a bit rude, but regarding this cat, erhm.....”

“It’s called Ginshari.”

“.....yeah, may I know if Ginshari, is the cat being taken care of by Maou-san?”

“Eh?”

“Is it given by someone, or an abandoned cat you brought home?”

Maou replied in shock at the accurate guess,

“H, how do you know?”

Yoshimura did not answer Maou’s question immediately but spoke while looking at the medical history table,

“Judging from the explanation through the phone, you seemed to have fed it milk meant for kittens.....did you feed it anything else? Such as the food for kittens which it is eating right now.....”

“No.....because it still looks young.”

“This is the reason for it feeling uncomfortable this time. Actually Ginshari has reached the stage where it should already be weaned off milk products. Converting to age, it has already been more than 60 days since it was born. Normally, the owner should know how to raise a kitten, but Maou-san seems to not know too much about this, so I deduced that it might have been picked up from the streets.....”

For enthusiasts or professionals, this seems to be a natural thing to know.

Yoshimura continued to speak,

“If it only drinks milk, then it shouldn’t have enough nutrients. To put it in a simpler manner, if it is only given liquids, of course it would get diarrhoea because its stomach is too empty.”

“I, I see.....”

Maou, in a dazed manner, continued watching Ginshari eating the pet food with large mouthfuls.

“Such a bright silver colour is rare, and from its green eyes, Ginshari might be a breed known as a Russian Blue Cat. This type of cat is very wary before being familiar with humans. Normally, before this age, this type of cat will be with its parents, probably because it was suddenly abandoned, so it accumulated quite a lot of stress in an unfamiliar environment.”

“Cats.....can also be stressed?”

Even though Maou was still unsure of the situation, Yoshimura said very seriously,

“Don’t underestimate stress okay? Even humans can get gastric perforation from stress. Especially when animals are still young, their bodies are weaker, and problems can appear immediately.”

After that, Ginshari, which seemed satisfied, finally left the bowl and started to lick its own body.

“Just a mention, that hairball it spit out, is body fur which clumped up after being swallowed from cleaning up its fur like right now.”

“Hair, hairball?”

“That’s right. Cats which swallow more, might spit out hairballs two or three times a week. To cats, this is a natural occurrence.”

“.....”

Maou realised sorrowfully about this severe lack of knowledge about this world’s cats.

Because Ginshari, who had finished cleaning its fur after much effort, started to walk around the treatment platform, Yoshimura put it back into the box Maou brought with practiced movements.

But Ginshari, who became lively after eating its fill, started to jump around and shake the box, so Yoshimura continued to grab the edge of the box and did not let go.

“.....it’s actually such an energetic child huh.”

Maou said listlessly,

“I originally thought that Ginshari recovered a little after coming home, but I had never seen it jump so energetically.”

“It was that weak at that time?”

Under Yoshimura’s questioning, Maou roughly explained the events of taking Ginshari home.

“I was acting irresponsibly right?”

“What do you mean?”

Yoshimura expressed his confusion at Maou’s words.

“Uh, because I don’t have an environment suitable for raising pets, yet I brought it home.....so I caused these things to happen to it, I already took it home, yet I let it starve, isn’t that putting the cart before the horse.....”

Once a person was taken into his home, he must properly protect his life, this was the promise Maou made himself when he gathered troops in the Demon World.

However, he who lost his demonic magic and became a human, could not even take care of a street side kitten properly.

Maou, who felt a sense of powerlessness after a gap of more than a hundred years, Yoshimura said directly,

“You’re not irresponsible at all.”

Yoshimura said as he looked at Ginshari which bit on the towel and rolled around, shaking the box continuously,

“Sigh, even though the landlord at the apartment you’re staying would not be happy.....not only did you investigate a way to feed it, you even helped it find an owner, and once you discovered something wrong, you immediately brought it for treatment. If Maou-san did not take it home, this child might die on the streets before it was given the name Ginshari and brought to our hospital. Maou-san has nothing to feel guilty about. If something must be said, the previous owner which abandoned Ginshari in the first place is the most irresponsible person.”

Even though it was a little pathetic, Yoshimura’s steadfast answer gave Maou the sense of being saved.

A Demon King actually being encouraged by a human veterinarian, he really cannot be helped now.

“.....But, in the end, I have not found a person who can take proper care of it.....”

With things as they are, Maou can no longer abandon Ginshari.

But even if Maou’s extensive connections were used, he still could not help Ginshari find a new owner.

Yoshimura said after thinking for a while,

“Maou-san, have you seen the billboard at the waiting room?”

“Eh? Are you referring to helping dogs vaccinate.....ah!”

Maou remembered that on the billboard in the waiting room, besides the various notifications, there was information that a puppy somewhere had found an owner.

“Even though finding someone immediately cannot be guaranteed, but do you want to try asking for an owner at our waiting room? Cats like Ginshari with good conditions and beautiful silver fur is uncommon. I think amongst the customers coming to our hospital, there should be someone who wants to adopt, Because Ginshari cannot be kept at our hospital, I still have to trouble Maou-san to continue taking care of it for a while, but I promise that once a prospective owner appears, I would definitely introduce someone who can be trusted to you.”

“Meow!”

Before Maou could nod to Yoshimura’s great suggestion, Ginshari had already answered with an energetic voice.

“So like this, it’s no longer considered a small child after all.”

As Ginshari continued to cause trouble within the box, Maou spent a lot of effort to bring it back to the Demon Fortress.

After Ashiya heard the diagnosis results from Maou, he said this with feeling.

“Cats seem to become adult cats after just one year. On the way back, it kept being mischievous inside the box.”

Ginshari, who could not be sent back into the box again after coming home, kept walking back and forth in a lively manner on the tatami.

“And then.....”

After seeing the things Maou brought back together with Ginshari, he showed a complex expression.

“It seems like we require at least these things currently.”

Under the suggestion of Aurora Animal Clinic, besides sugar supplements to add to the milk and a plate to hold the solid food, cat litter for the cat to go to the toilet and a guidebook for taking care of kittens was also placed next to the box for containing Ginshari.

“Actually it doesn’t cost as much as it looks, including the consultation fee, it only costs around 7000 yen.”

Hearing the price 7000 yen, Ashiya’s expression froze for an instant.

“Meow! Meow!”

At this moment, Ginshari, which had fully regained its energy approached Ashiya’s legs and weaved between his legs in a figure of 8 pattern with steady steps, and just as Ashiya met with Ginshari’s clear and moist eyes as it occasionally stopped to look at the owner----

“Sigh, this, this can’t be helped.”

He said in a soft hearted manner.

“Pu-shu.....meow.”

“Huff, huff, yeah, ah, erhm, how much pet food do I need to pour for one meal.....”

Ashiya felt the sting of Ginshari’s fur as it penetrated his pants and groaned strangely. He slowed down to prevent stepping on Ginshari accidentally.

However, Ginshari obediently followed next to Ashiya, not willing to leave him.

Maou, who smiled subconsciously when he saw this scene, started to rummage through the shopping bag like he suddenly remembered something.

“Also, this is a high quality mask I bought at the hypermart. Urushihara, just wear this and tolerate it for a while longer.”

“Noooo wayyyyyyyy!”

“Meow! Meow! Meow!”

A tragic cry of a fallen angel was heard from the closet, as if it was teasing Urushihara, Ginshari left Ashiya’s side and meowed in front of the closet.

Seeing that Ginshari was going to use its claws to claw at the sliding door, Maou quickly picked it up.

“Seriously, so noisy.....”

Suzuno frowned in the neighbouring room, but from the joy in her voice, she seemed to be privately relieved that Ginshari was alright.

After that, another period of time passed.

Ginshair had already recovered the liveliness a kitten should have, and also got used to the members of the Demon Fortress, and caused a lot of mischief for the demons who planned to take over the world.

But after all, they are the Demon King, and one of the Four Kings known as a Chisho.

(T/N: Chisho is an ancient term to refer to a general with intelligence and wits and a high ability to lead the army in war. An important commander on the battle field).

They no longer made a mistake in the amount for Ginshari’s pet food, and could easily stop Ginshari from knocking into any furniture because it played around too much.

Especially the skill of accurately taking note of when the kitten wanted to go to the toilet and putting it on the cat litter, it was already at the professional level.

In order for Ginshari to be able to live comfortably in the cupboard box, the demons would also periodically change the torn towels inside, and right now, even the emergency bought cat milk was almost finished.

Because Ginshari really liked the cat toy stick Maou bought at the 100 yen store, now even if Maou was not waving it, the kitten would also bite the cat toy stick on its own to play.

“.....Seeing them like this, would it really be alright when an adopter appears later?”

“I don’t know, don’t ask me.”

“It’s really cute.”

“Ah choo!”

Seeing the two demons playing with the silver kitten, Emi, Suzuno and Chiho voiced their own thoughts, as for Urushihara, he just sneezed as usual.

Therefore, when it was going to be two weeks after the Demon King brought Ginshari back home----

“.....Ugh!”

Maou’s phone received a phone call from Aurora Animal Clinic.

Because it has already slowed become a fixed routine for using the evening time to play with the cat, Maou had the feeling of getting cold water thrown on him.

“Maou-san, this is Yoshimura. I have someone here who wants to adopt Ginshari.....”

“Is that so.....”

“Meow? Meow! Meow!”

Discovering that Maou was not concentrating on playing with it, Ginshari started to climb on Maou’s body, intending to get his attention.

Maou let Ginshari use his claws to grab his own skin and the sleeves on his shirt, and continued to talk to Yoshimura.

And Ashiya also had an expression of preparedness, watching Maou and Ginshari like this.

As for Urushihara, he was holding his breath in the closest, sneezing softly.

“.....”

After Maou finished speaking, he did not forget the original purpose, and let Ginshari down from his shoulders as it started to challenge climbing Maou’s head, and said directly,

“They found someone to adopt it.”

“.....Is that so.....”

“The other party seems to be a trusted person. And their experience in raising cats is very comprehensive, it’s said that the cats which that person raised before lived much longer than the average life expectancy.”

“.....a really good candidate huh.”

“.....yeah.”

Even though it was a topic to be happy about, Maou and Ashiya’s tone was gloomy.

“Both of you feel gloomy.”

Urushihara in the closet said this.

“Doctor Yoshimura arranged for us to meet with the other person tomorrow. Of course he said that it’s alright even if we reject.....”

“.....I don’t think we can do that. After all, this cat shouldn’t be staying here.”

Because Maou and the others originally were unable to take care of Ginshari until the end at the Demon Fortress, they started looking for someone to adopt it.

Since an ideal party appeared, they did not have a reason to reject.

Maou picked up Ginshari, who finally climbed on the head of the Demon King, moved it close to his face and said,

“That’s great, Ginshari. Finally someone is willing to take you in.”

Ginshari looked down at its temporary owner’s inexplicable expression, and yawned innocently.

“Meow.....uh!”

“.....I say, don’t throw up a hairball at a time like this.”

Ginshari threw up a hairball in front of Maou and started to struggle by waving its four limbs, an atmosphere which lacked any sadness.

“Ah, that’s right, Emi and Chi-chan also took care of it a lot, so we have to let them know. Like this, from tomorrow onwards, that person wouldn’t have to worry about Ginshari being eaten by us.”

The deepness of the feelings Maou and Ashiya invested in Ginshari, have reached the stage where it cannot be taken back.

“Meow meow, is going to see a doctor?”

Alas=Ramus looked up at Maou from the child seat of the Demon King’s prized steed----bicycle Dullahan II.

“We’re going to meet its new owner.”

Maou, pushing the bike forward, nodded and said this.

Ginshari, inside the cupboard box secured in the shopping basket at the front, was quieter than usual because of the nervousness felt from the rare outing.

After Maou told Emi that Ginshari will be given to a new owner, for unknown reasons, Emi appeared with Alas=Ramus.

After confirming that the hospital was near Villa Rosa Sasazuka----

“It’s a rare chance, take her out with you.”

In a rare action, Emi gave Alas=Ramus to Maou to take care of.

“.....Did she get cat influenza?”

Even though Maou was shocked because of the suggestion which did not match Emi’s style, Emi, who seemed to lack motivation lately, said nonchalantly,

“I heard from Rika. On the way home after giving a foster pet to someone else, there will be an abnormal feeling of loneliness. Why don’t you take Alas=Ramus for a meal? It’s still hot today, you have to be careful of dehydration and make sure she doesn’t catch a cold because of the air conditioning.”

“.....Once I hear you say this, I only feel that it is very strange.”

Even if Maou felt unhappy because his reluctance to part with Ginshari was seen through, coupled with the fact of accepting his enemy’s generosity----

“Oh my. Don’t tell me you want one of us to see your demoralised state because you feel lost after separating from Ginshari?”

Once he was teased like this, he could only close his mouth obediently.

“Actually even if you want to go alone, I don’t mind. Alas=Ramus, Papa doesn’t seem to want to go out with you, what can be done.....”

“Aah, seriously! I’m going out!”

Maou ignored the evilly acting Emi, and under the gazes of Ashiya, who looked reluctant to part, Suzuno and Chiho, he headed for Aurora Animal Clinic.

“Meow meow~~ meow meow~~”

Alas=Ramus waved her hands, and sang a strange tune without any fixed rhythm.

Maou gave a wry smile seeing the situation, and paid attention to the box holding Ginshari, preventing Alas=Ramus from hitting the box due to a bout of excitement, and then father and daughter, as well as the cat slowly reached Aurora Animal Clinic.

Once Maou stopped the bicycle, he first picked Alas=Ramus up from the seat and put her down, and after instructing her to be good, Maou picked up the box containing Ginshari which had been tied down to the shopping basket.

For reasons unknown, Alas=Ramus started to walk next to Maou while using both her hands to cover her mouth.

“Alas=Ramus, why are you covering your mouth?”

Maou asked curiously.

“Being good, shh~~”

It looks like to Alas=Ramus, ‘being good’ is equivalent to ‘being quiet’.

Discovering that the child who saw him as a father actually interpreting his meaning like this, Maou subconsciously showed a smile, and therefore, Maou, who felt rather assured, opened the front door of Aurora Animal Clinic.

“Ah, Maou-san, I’ve waited for a while.....eh? This young lady is.....”

Veterinarian Yoshimura, who had been waiting at the waiting room beforehand, was shocked when he saw Alas=Ramus next to Maou.

“Uh, how should I put it, this is my daughter.”

“Is, is that so.”

“Bark bark!”

After seeing the human porcelain dog at the waiting room entrance, Alas=Ramus’s eyes shone, and immediately released her ‘quiet’ mode.



“Hey, Alas=Ramus, shhh~ okay.”

“Shh----? Bark bark must shh----too.”

Even though the porcelain dog only dangled an ‘OPEN’ sign and did not make any sound, Alas=Ramus still seriously placed her index finger in front of her mouth.

“Then, about the person who is willing to adopt Ginshari.....”

“Alright, let me introduce you. This is.....”

Once Maou saw the person who stood up from the bench deep within the waiting room at the calling of Veterinarian Yoshimura, he widened his eyes in surprise.

“Eh? Hirose-san?”

“Eh? Both of you know each other?”

Once Yoshimura heard Maou’s word, he also got a shock.

The person standing there is the owner of Hirose Bicycle Shop, shop manager Hirose.

Because Maou had been rejected when he sought out Hirose to discuss about Ginshari, when he found out that the adopter was actually Hirose, he found it difficult to conceal his shock.

“I feel rather embarrassed, Maou, since I rejected you so coldly earlier.”

Hirose said embarrassedly with a wry smile,

“Did you hear from Doctor Yoshimura that I had taken care of cats before?”

“I heard that that cat lived for a long time.....”

“Yeah, if so, about the point which it ‘lived for a long time’, I shouldn’t need to explain anymore. It passed away 2 years ago.”

“But I feel that Hirose-san’s Luna lived very happily.”

Yoshimura said warmly like he was reminiscing the past.

“Luna is that cat’s name?”

“That’s right.”

Hirose, with a level-headed character, said bashfully,

“I started taking care of it before I got married, to be direct, that cat’s age is older than my first child. After it passed away, my whole family was saddened for a long time, therefore I originally did not want to take care of another cat besides Luna, this was also the reason why I rejected you at first.....erhm, can I open that box?”

After getting Maou’s approval, Hirose opened up the box in Maou’s arms.

“Meow?”

After that, Ginshari poked its head out without any hesitation.

“I got a shock when I saw the photo, this child looks exactly like Luna. Luna was also a Russian Blue cat, and its fur was especially bright, perhaps it might not be a purebred, even then, it was still very beautiful. Just as I coincidentally came to visit Doctor Yoshimura because the anniversary of Luna’s death was coming, my eyes were immediately attracted to that notice, and I felt I couldn’t leave that cat alone.....have you already given it a name?”

“It’s called Ginshari.”

“Ginshari.....”

Even though Hirose was momentarily speechless, he still smiled immediately,

“Are you willing to let it come to my house? Of course, I do not plan to treat it as Luna’s replacement, but a new family member. Erhm, even though I don’t know if the children can accept the name ‘Ginshari’, but I will try to find a way to convince them.”

“As long as all of you can treasure it, you can give it any name you want.”

After Maou replied this with a smile, he passed the box containing Ginshari to Hirose.

“Can I come and see it occasionally?”

“Of course.”

“Meow.”

It looks like Ginshari did not have any special opinions about its new owner.

※

“What, so it’s someone who lives nearby.”

“And it was actually someone I know.”

Emi listened to Maou’s result report with an uninterested look on her face.

“Bark bark, bark bark!”

Alas=Ramus was holding a porcelain puppy doll, and Emi sighed after discovering that Maou spoilt the child.

“Sigh, that’s too bad. I originally thought that you would be just like when Alas=Ramus disappeared, crying on the way back, demoralised from depression.”

“.....Seriously you.”

Emi’s teasing concerned tone, caused Maou to feel very uncomfortable.

“Hirose-san, is it the Hirose-san who runs the bicycle shop on the shopping street?”

As expected of a local, Chiho seems to know where Hirose’s shop is.

“Isn’t that great. Isn’t it nearby? Like this, Ginshari and Maou-san won’t be lonely anymore!”

Chiho’s careless sentence, caused Maou to feel worse.

“I, I won’t feel lonely in the first place. And after that, I still have to send things to Hirose-san’s house, so I still haven’t felt any feelings of goodbye.”

Maou, who felt seen through because of Chiho’s innocent words, actually still had to deliver some miscellaneous products needed to take care of Ginshari to Hirose later.

They planned to first use some tools which the kitten is used to, then slowly spend time to let to get adjusted to the lifestyle of Hirose’s family.

Maou packed a few items related to Ginshari into a bag, but only when he was packing the cat stick toy with fresh teeth marks on it, he felt a stab in his heart.

“Hey, Emi.”

“What is it?”

“.....Thank you for bringing Alas=Ramus over.”

“.....”

“What, so you still felt lonely after all”----even though Emi almost said this, because Maou immediately looked away, she missed the chance to open her mouth.

“.....Sigh. It feels like rather than suddenly creating motivation, it’s more like losing the feeling of tension.”

This is actually one of the many sighs Ashiya did tonight.

Perhaps compared to Maou, it was Ashiya who was more listless.

As Ashiya and Maou took turns to be in charge of feeding Ginshari, the both of them were temporarily unable to break the habit of checking the clock and looking towards the corner of the room where Ginshari’s cardboard box was originally placed.

Maou, who played with Ginshari once he got home from work for the past few days, lay on the tatami because he was suddenly free.

As for Urushihara----

“.....”

He had not walked out of the closet.

“Hey, isn’t it about time for you to come out, Ginshari is not around anymore. It should be very hot inside right.”

“.....”

With Maou’s call, Urushihara opened the closet sliding door and poked half a head out.”

“So scary. Are you Zashiki Warashi?”

“.....Ah, it’s no good after all.”

Urushihara ignored Maou and closed the closet immediately.

“Ashiya, even tomorrow is okay, please use the vacuum cleaner to clean up.”

“.....Why do I have to clean according to your orders.”

Ashiya replied with an impassive face.

“Ginshari’s fur and smell is still around. So it feels like my nose is itching again! Think of it as me begging you, early tomorrow morning, use the vacuum cleaner.....ah, ah, ah.....”

Urushihara suddenly stopped talking and started to produce strange breathing sounds.

Then----

“Ah choo----!”

And gave an exaggerated sneeze.

“It’s hard on you too.....”

Different from Urushihara, Maou, who did not sense anything related to Ginshari, said this with feeling.

“But.....this room, there was a cat here once.”

“That is correct.....but Demon King-sama, saying it this way, other people will think Ginshari has passed away. We should pray that it can grow up healthily in Hirose-san’s home.”

“.....That’s right.”

Once Maou nodded, an angry voice was heard from the closet.

“Don’t start reminiscing because of my sneeze! Ah.....ah choo!”

Urushihara’s sneeze shook the walls of the closet, and this sound caused Suzuno next door to frown.

“Pray that it grows up healthily huh.....”

“Demon King-sama?”

“.....Ugh, I just feel that this really can’t even be called a joke.”

“Hm?”

“.....it’s nothing, let’s sleep. Hey, Urushihara! Hurry up and open the door, I want to take a towel blanket!”

“Wah! W, wait, let me put on the mask first.....didn’t I ask you to wait? Ah, ah choo!”

Even though Suzuno was annoyed at the Demon Fortress's juvenile agreement, but only on the point of praying that the silver kitten could grow up healthily, she was of the same opinion as them.

“.....The Demon King, saved a small life huh.....”

Even though the skies above the Earth did not have any Gods who can be prayed to, Suzuno still thought while looking up at the endlessly spanning cloudless sky.

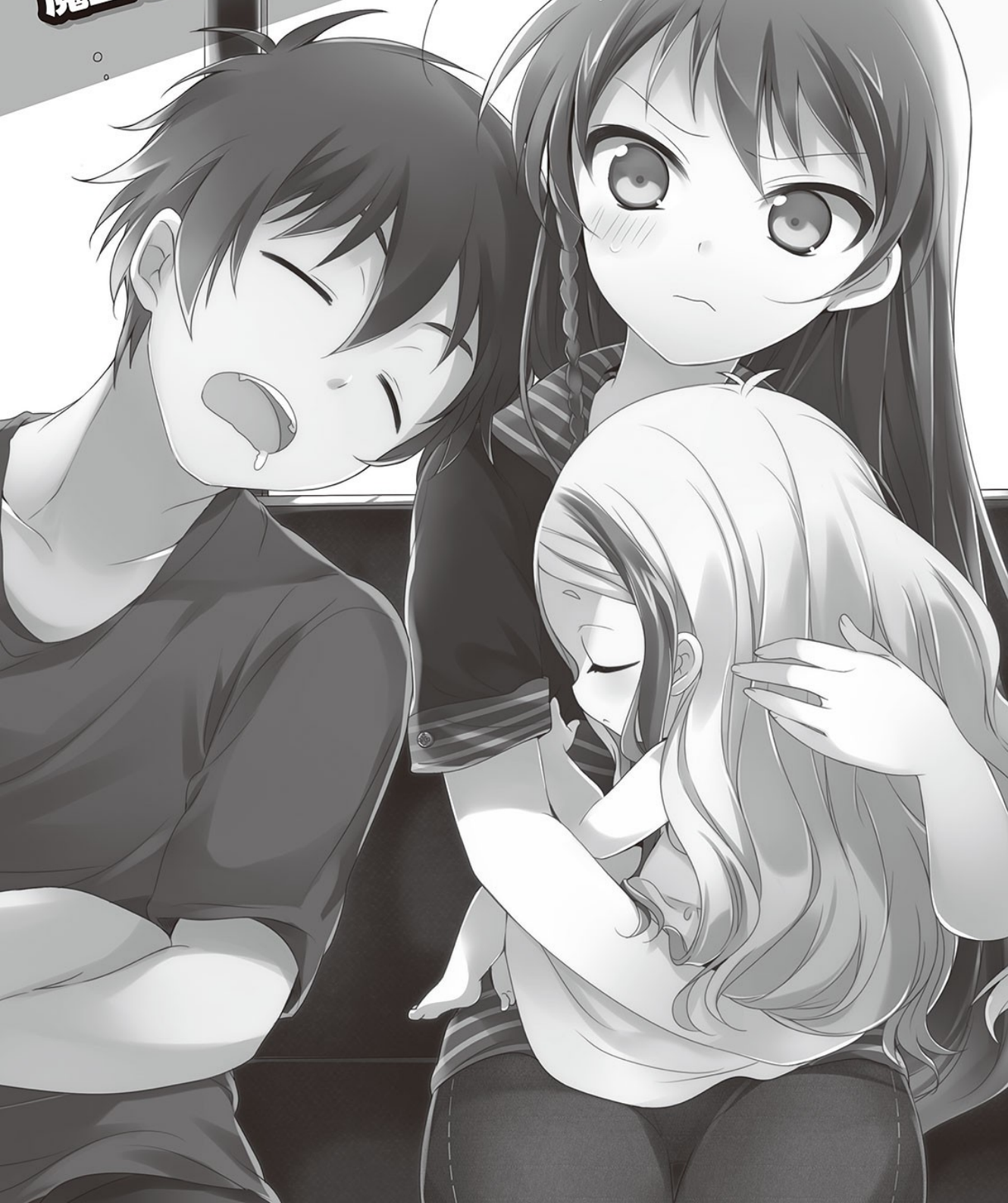
“If this virtuous deed can bring a glimmer of hope to the Demon King, then who will offer a helping hand, and in what way.”

The feelings of demons, the feelings of humans, the summer night ignored all this feelings, and solemnly darkened under the summer heat and the noise of the city.

END

Short Story 3: Demon King and Hero, buying a futon together

魔王と勇者、お布団を買いに



“Bell, I’m sorry, can I ask you to help me watch Alas=Ramus for a bit?”

“Oh my, Emilia, you’re here. Is something wrong?”

A particular evening when the summer sun started to abate. Suzuno stayed in her own room reading kimono catalogues, and Emi, whom she thought had went to visit her neighbours, actually came here with a dangerous expression on her face.

“Suzu nee-chan.”

The girl entrusted to her by Emi, Alas=Ramus, obediently let Suzuno carry her.

“I’ll be back soon.”

After saying this, Emi left again without explaining the reason.

“Suzu nee-chan, is this an art book?”

“.....Hm? Ah, this is a book which publishes many photos of beautiful kimonos.....”

Even though Suzuno felt that Emi seemed strange, but still opened the catalogue to answer Alas=Ramus’s question, and at this time----

“Rejected!”

“Oh?”

“Uu?”

An angry shout loud enough to blow away the thin walls of the apartment was suddenly heard from next door, Suzuno could not help but put her guard up, and Alas=Ramus also widened her eyes in curiosity.

In addition, on the other side of the wall where the neighbouring closet was, a sound like large rat frantically running away was heard, then there was a short silence.

“.....Alas=Ramus.”

“Yes, Suzu nee-chan.”

Alas=Ramus obediently raised a hand to answer Suzuno.

Just large noise from just now, definitely came from Emi.

As for the reason that would cause the Hero from a foreign world, Yusa Emi, a.k.a Emilia Justina to shout in the Demon Fortress next to Suzuno---the six tatami wooden apartment Villa Rosa Sasazuka Room 201 in Tokyo City, Shibuya District Sasazuka----

“Is Mama.....fighting with Papa again?”

Besides that, there is no other possibility.

Probably Alas=Ramus’s ‘Papa’, Demon King Maou Sadao, said something which made ‘Mama’ Emi angry again.

However, different from Suzuno's prediction, Alas=Ramus shook her head and said,

“Erhm, today. I said I wanted to sleep at Papa's home, then Mama asked me to play with Suzu nee-chan.....”

“Ah.....”

Alas=Ramus tried her best to express the contents with her limited vocabulary, causing Suzuno's shoulders to sag weakly.

“.....Hopefully this will not cause a storm.”

※

“D, don't shout so loudly all of a sudden!”

The master of the Room 201 Demon Fortress, Maou Sadao, calmed his fluttering heart, and protested towards Emi.

“How is this sudden! Seeing me entrust Alas=Ramus to Suzuno, you should know that things would not be settled peacefully.”

In the six tatami room under the sun, Emi glared at Maou with a sharp gaze matching her title of Hero.

“About the fact that I have you let Alas=Ramus meet you once every few days, I can only accept it reluctantly. But my tolerance has its limits! I definitely would not allow her to stay at your house!”

“You are the Hero, how can you be so stingy!”

The other person standing next to Maou, a lanky man, also started to protest,

“What, Alsiel! Do you have anything to say?”

The lanky man, a full head taller than Maou, is the Demon General Alsiel----
Ashiya Shiro.

At the same time, he is also the Chisho in charge of all the housework and finances of the Demon Fortress.

“Anyway, you must be basing on the shallow reason that ‘You demons are a bane to Alas=Ramus’s education’ to disallow her from staying here!”

Maou and Ashiya are the King of the Demon World and Head General respectively, therefore, Emi, as the Hero, naturally viewed these enemies who once fought against her with animosity.

Through the coloured lenses ‘Demon’, Emi had already said many mean and poisonous comments to Maou and the others.

“But can you still be considered a ‘mother’ like this? Actually cruelly rejecting the wish of a child to be with her ‘father’, forget about Hero, no person is as cold and heartless as you. With regards to Alas=Ramus, shouldn’t we consider it carefully, disregarding past grudges?”

The girl who Emi entrusted Kamazuki Suzuno, a.k.a the Doctrinal Correction Council Inquisitor of the Ente Isla Church Crestia Bell to take care of----
Alas=Ramus, is not a normal child.

The girl is a personification of a fragment of the orb which made the foreign world Ente Isla---- the 'Yesod' Sephirah.

Alas=Ramus strongly believed that the Hero Emi and Demon King Maou is her own 'Mama' and 'Papa', and when she first came to Japan, she lived in the Demon Fortress as an independent entity.

After that, in order to prevent Alas=Ramus and the Holy Sword from falling into the hands of the angels of Ente Isla, Alas=Ramus could only merge with Emi's Holy Sword 'Evolving Holy Sword, One Wing', and as a result, she had to move to Emi's apartment.

After a series of commotions, in order to protect the girl, with regards to Alas=Ramus's life in Japan, mutual enemies Maou and Emi should have made an agreement not to touch on each other's past as much as possible.

However, Emi smiled at Ashiya's claim.

"Past grudges~? Alsiel, do you really think I said this because of that kind of reason? Even though it's not as if such a thing was not involved at all."

"So there was such an influence after all."

Emi ignored Maou's rebuke and continued to speak,

"But, even if I do not consider the fact that all of you are demons, I will definitely not approve of Alas=Ramus staying in this room!"

After saying this, Emi walked up to the closet without hesitation and opened the sliding door in one go.

“Uwahh!”

An embarrassing scream was heard from the top layer of the closet which was opened, and a small sized young man rolled out at the same time.

The young man is the one who ran into the closet to hide when Emi shouted at the beginning and then continued to hide inside while eavesdropping, the former Demon General Lucifer, a.k.a Urushihara Hanzo.

“Th, that’s dangerous! What are you doing!”

Urushihara, who was barely able to use his hand to brace himself on the tatami to avoid hitting his head, protested, but Emi ignored him.

Emi said to the closet which was emptied after being vacated by Urushihara,

“If all of you want Alas=Ramus to stay no matter what, then at least buy a futon!”

The three demons could only stay silent because they had nothing else to say in return.

Not only Ashiya, Emi also wished to do her upmost to fulfil Alas=Ramus’s wishes.

After all, to Alas=Ramus, the Demon Fortress which she lived for that one week is her true home, if she did not merge with Emi’s holy sword later, perhaps she might still be living here.

But just from the results, after being taken in by Emi, Alas=Ramus's living environment changed a lot.

After all, Emi's apartment had air conditioning installed.

This is especially important for a young child.

These few days, the highest temperature in Tokyo city is over 35 degrees. Even though Villa Rosa Sasazuka's ventilation conditions is good in comparison, it was still enough to let Emi, silently glaring at the demons, to start sweating on the forehead, which did not help much with the temperature.

And the second point which made Emi angry is the futon.

Emi was not familiar with the culture of sleeping on the floor, so even if she lived in Japan, she also slept on the bed.

Until now, Emi was unable to forget the scene when Alas=Ramus slept in Emi's room for the first time.

“Soft! So soft!”

At that time, Alas=Ramus patted Emi's mattress very happily.

Emi only found out at that time that, in the past, Alas=Ramus actually slept directly on the towels laid on the tatami.

Compared to Japan, Ente Isla could not be considered well-to-do, whether in their culture or their economy, however unless it is in especially

impoverished countries, every family would have their own beds. On the contrary, Japan is an economic powerhouse with a wide commodity range, and Maou is living a normal social life here, so Emi could not imagine why he would not even buy one futon.

“I won’t ask all of you to buy those that use soft material like a 100% down quilt. But no matter what, asking a child to sleep directly on a tatami at night is too much. Children at this age have very soft bone structure, what if her body picks up bad habits because of such a strange sleeping style!”

Basically, this environment of having three demons sleep in the tatami in a 川 pattern in the summer is already intolerable.

Even though Maou and the rest are the type of pay attention to their attire and cleanliness, but unless there is an anti-odour, anti-bacterial mist sprayer nearby, Emi would not even want to step on the tatami barefoot.

Emi and Ashiya were totally unable to rebuke Emi’s stern words out of a sense of justice. As for Urushihara, he showed an unconcerned look and planned to return to the cupboard, but after being glared by Emi, he frantically ran to the area next to the window.

“.....I’ve been puzzled since before, why don’t you buy futons? Don’t tell me you don’t even have money for this?”

If they just buy a one person quilt, even walking into the store to buy an entire sleeping set will not cost that much money.

As long as they are not too fussy, they would be able to buy decent quality products for the whole year with a budget of around 15,000 yen.

“Even though you have such a complete storage space, it’s a waste not to make use of it. Wouldn’t it completely become Lucifer’s personal room like this?”

Emi looked at the opened closet and sighed deeply.

“I have already given up, and started seeing that place as a place to store Lucifer.”

“Ashiya, are you saying in a roundabout way that I am a burden here?”

Even though Urushihara protested to Ashiya’s mumbles, Emi actually partially acknowledged Ashiya’s opinion.

“.....Then not considering the upper layer, the bottom layer doesn’t seem to have anything stored besides cardboard boxes.....as long as it is cleaned up, there should be space that can be used.”

“Emilia, can you not say it like it’s already confirmed that I will be kept in the upper layer?”

Emi ignored Urushihara’s protests and turned towards Maou.

“.....Even though I don’t really want to say this.”

Therefore, Maou could only lower his head like he had given up, changed to a more relaxed sitting position and said,

“Before I answer, Emi, let me ask you something first, after you return to Ente Isla, what do you plan to do with the home appliances you own?”

“Home appliances? You’re referring to the electronics I’m using at home?”

Emi subconsciously looked at the kitchen of the Demon Fortress, and pointed to the fridge and microwave, Maou also nodded in reply.

“Even though it depends on the circumstances, but for electronics like microwave and fridge, as long as it is modified to using spells to provide electricity, it probably can be taken back for use.”

“Taking things back from a foreign world is probably not that good right. Doesn’t things like this happen often? Technology cohesion being messed up because technologically advanced items are brought back or something?”

Even if Emi could roughly understand what Maou was trying to express, she still shrugged and said,

“I travelled the whole of Ente Isla in order to fight the Demon King, and even came to a foreign world in the end. Even if I bring some tools which can make my life more convenient afterwards back, I probably will not get persecuted by Heaven.”

“.....I really don’t know if your actions are considered greedy or not.”

In order to prevent Emi from criticising him, Ashiya said this softly.

Just from this statement, perhaps people will think that Emi’s thinking of monopolising Earth’s technology in Ente Isla is a kind of arrogance.

But on the other hand, travelling the world, putting her life on the line to defeat the Demon King, the reward she wants for bring peace to the world is actually just a microwave and fridge, products on the level of prizes which can be won from a department store street lottery, Emi can be said to be desire-free.

“But, honestly, I have also considered similar things before. I also wish to bring the microwave back, and hope that my home has 2 or three fridges. But.....”

As he spoke, Maou started to look at the closet behind Emi.

“A futon.....can’t be handled that way. Think about it carefully, we’re demons you know.”

“Eh?”

“Urushihara is still okay, even if he reverts to his original form, he won’t change much. But with Ashiya’s height right now, he can’t even fit into a long towel you know? And my situation is about the same.”

When he reached this point, Emi finally understood.

Their male human form right now, is just a temporary state.

The true forms of Maou, Ashiya and Urushihara are demons from the Demon World, especially the outer appearances of Maou and Ashiya’s demon form, their builds far exceed that of an adult male.

“.....Pu!”

After thinking to this point, Emi could not help but laugh.

And Maou, like he already expected Emi’s reaction, turned his head to the side with a frown.

“D, does it matter, pu! You’re a Demon King walking the commoner route anyway! Ahaha! Like this, in order to prevent the horn I cut off from hurting, should you buy a softer pillow.....ahahahaha!”

“Don’t laugh! Don’t laugh while thinking of Demon King-sama in his demon form sleeping while being covered in a human sized futon!”

Imagining Maou in his Demon King form lying on an overly small futon, Emi laughed until she could not close her mouth, while Ashiya protested, blushing.

“Hey, Ashiya, imagining in such a detailed manner, it actually makes me angry.”

“Eh?”

“.....Anyway, the futon will be useless even if it brought over, and.....”

Maou crossed his arms, looked at Emi in an overbearing manner, and said,

“If I prepare a bed for myself to sleep in, it feels like I will definitely stay in this world. So it’s purely because I don’t want to buy any. To me, Japan is just a temporary place to stay after all.”

“Ahaha.....ha.....”

After laughing for a while, she stuck her hands on her hip and said in an irritated manner,

“A Demon King actually believing this such superstitions, you really can’t be helped anymore. Then again, you better not say such things in front of Chiho.”

“.....”

Emi said the name of a young girl who is not present to remind Maou.

A high school girl who is the only person in Japan to know the true identities of Maou and Emi and the situation of the foreign world Ente Isla----Sasaki Chiho, even if she knew Maou is the Demon King, she still liked him.

If Maou said that Japan is just a temporary place to stay in front of her, Chiho would definitely feel depressed.

To Emi, Chiho is a very important friend.

“.....Sigh, to be serious, buying futons for three people is quite a large sum right? No matter what, we don’t have that kind of leeway, and now, it did not seem necessary.

“Yeah, it’s not like I don’t understand.”

Even if Emi would not go so far to interfere in the economic situation of others, there are other areas that she could not understand.

“But you came to Japan for almost a year right? With this situation, how did you go through winter?”

In summer, they could at least still barely make it through by making a bed on the floor.

But when the cold winter arrives, not using a blanket in a room without heating feels like a suicidal move.....

“When we first bought this kotasu, they gave us a thin blanket. After that it wearing more layers of clothing, and then Ashiya will climb in from the opposite direction to sleep.”

“Eh.....”

Maou placed her hand on the kotasu in the middle of the room used as the dining table, work table and other uses, and said this proudly, as for Urushihara, who had never experienced winter in Japan, he groaned with an expressionless face.

“.....Sigh, if you plan to freeze during winter this year, then I have nothing much to say.....”

There’s no need to fight them, from the way the Demon King and the rest are living, they would die on their own even if she ignored them.

“Seriously, all of you.”

Even if she continued to discuss, it would never end.

“Alright. Just like what Alsiel said just now, I also treasure Alas=Ramus..... the money to buy the futon, let me contribute.”

“Seriously?”

“What did you say?”

“Really?”

The three demons suddenly looked at Emi with sparkling eyes.

Seeing their respectful gazes, Emi’s eyes narrowed and cleared the misunderstanding the three of them had.

“I was talking about Alas=Ramus’s you know? Why do I have to help all of you pay for futons. By the way, you are also her ‘Papa’ right? Of course you have to pay half of it.”

At that instant, the expressions on Maou and the others were so depressed they it gave people the urge to video it down for safekeeping.

“Why did I have to say it in a moment of rashness.”

The next day, under the swaying of the train, she immediately regretted the words she said at the Demon Fortress the day before.

Wrong, considering Alas=Ramus's situation, Emi still cannot ban the girl from meeting Maou, about this, she had already accepted it.

The problem is that Emi and Alas=Ramus were linked together through the holy sword.

Emi and Alas=Ramus, who were merged together because of the holy sword, they were unable to stay beyond a certain distance away from each other.

In other words, for Alas=Ramus to stay in the Demon Fortress, Emi would need to stay nearby.

Even though she knew doing so would cause trouble for other people, it would be alright as long as Emi stayed at Suzuno's place next day, the problem is whether Alas=Ramus was willing to let it be that way.

In the past, during the commotion where Heaven wanted to obtain Alas=Ramus, Emi, Maou and Alas=Ramus had spent a night together 'exclusively as a family'.

As long as Alas=Ramus still clearly remembered the events of that day, she would definitely want the three of them to sleep together.

Even though at that time, the situation where Emi and Maou would share the same pillow because they did not have any futons for adults would probably not occur, but in some sense, there was a problem which was simpler and more realistic than Emi's mental health.

“Alsiel and Lucifer can't be chased out right.....”

Which is the current Demon Fortress did not have enough space for Emi to sleep.

The situation now is different from the time Emi previously stayed the night.

No matter how small Urushihara was, having three guys lying down on the Demon Fortress's tatami is already the limit. Even by forcing it, just like before, there should only be enough gap to fit Alas=Ramus.

Even if they tried their best to move the computer table and kotasu away, Emi would still need to be very close to the demons to sleep together with Alas=Ramus.

Even if it is for Alas=Ramus, Emi still has things she could not do. Whether it is as a Hero, or as a woman.

“Stuff Lucifer into the cupboard.....can't be done right.”

If Urushihara was allowed to cause noise in the cupboard like Zashiki Warashi, Alas=Ramus might be frightened and cry.

Even though Ashiya and Urushihara stayed at Suzuno's place next door last time, but it was really an exceptions amongst exceptions.

“I need to find a way for Alas=Ramus to accept.....”

Why did she have to feel troubled over issues like divorced couples fighting over custody.

“.....And I don't know how to choose a child's futon at all.....I'm seriously too hasty.”

Emi used the internet browser on her mobile phone in a melancholy manner.

Emi had went to a nearby clothing store to buy her own futon, but unfortunately when she made a detour before she returned home yesterday, she discovered that futons for children were not sold there.

Even if she planned to search on the internet, it was still a futon for Alas=Ramus when she's sleeping.

Even though Emi hoped to buy something which the person herself likes and with better quality, since she had agreed with Maou to pay half the price each, Emi did not want to buy on her own without matching the other party's monetary values, and then get nagged by that group of demons afterwards.

What kind of futon would be good.

In Japan, Emi already cultivated a habit of directly asking someone else when she had something she did not understand.

So even though she troubled over many things last night, during the afternoon today she still nonchalantly asked her colleague and friend Suzuki Rika,

“Ne, do you know where I can buy a futon for children?”

“Eh?”

One of her colleagues working at the customer service centre of the mobile phone company Docodemo branch company----Suzuki Rika, after hearing Emi's question, not only did she widen her eyes, she even dropped the fork she wanted to use to eat the lunch set spaghetti.

“H, hey, Rika, what's wrong?”

Even if Emi was very surprised at Rika's strong reaction----

“Of, of course I will get a shock. It's because Emi suddenly said something about a futon for children.....eh? Why do you have to buy such a thing?”

“Yeah, didn't I mention before that Maou is helping a relative look after a child?”

Before Emi had looked for Rika to discuss how to get along with Alas=Ramus.

Therefore Emi also said so naturally this time.

“Y, yeah.”

“Actually that child is now.....”

At this moment, Emi froze.

This was an obvious mistake.

However even if the words spoken just now were not well thought through, Emi could not take back her words.

“What? The child of Maou-san’s relative? Is it the child whom you said thought you were her mother?”

“Yeah, that’s her, and then, that child.....”

Is currently at my house.

Emi should have considered beforehand what Rika’s reaction would be if she told Rika this.

Even though Rika is Emi’s good friend, she was not like Sasaki Chiho who knew Emi and Maou’s true identity.

Even if she knew the existence of Alas=Ramus, Rika naturally still did not know the true identity of the girl, so before, Emi could only tell Rika the girl is Maou’s relative.

“Will occasionally come to my home.....and would sometimes stay at my place.....”

Even though she knew this explanation was a little forced, unable to change the topic, Emi could only confess this.

“S, stay at your place? What’s with that? Why? The child called Alas or Silas, is being taken care of by Emi now?”

“Alas=Ramus!”

She was still her ‘child’, so Emi seriously corrected Rika’s sloppy way of addressing, but that was not what she cared about at all.

“That child is Maou-san’s relative right? Why must she be looked after by Emi? Isn’t that very strange?”

That’s right. Even if Rika did not explain, Emi also knew that this situation is very strange.

Until a few days ago, other than Alas=Ramus’s misunderstanding, there should not be any connections between Emi and her.

“What.....even though I think it’s rather impossible, but did Maou-san see that the child is really attached to Emi, so he took the chance to push the caretaking job to you?”

Even though Rika picked up the fork she had dropped, her stern gaze was filled with suspicion.

After flinching once, Emi said,

“It, it’s not like that! He didn’t push the caretaking job to me.....”

“Then why? Depending on the situation, I can help you teach Maou-san a lesson, you know? Or do I have to make use of the connections of my family’s company back home to introduce a lawyer to you?”

It feels that the topic had become more and more serious on the civil end.

“It’s no use even if you introduce a lawyer from Kobe to me, Rika, calm down a bit. Maou really did not give up on the responsibility of taking care of a child!”

From Rika’s aura, if she was not stopped, she might lose control and go to Maou’s place and punch him.

And regrettably, Emi would also feel troubled like this.

Because regardless of Maou’s attitude, it could not change the fact that that Emi and Alas=Ramus are currently inseparable existences.

“Erhm, how should I say it, with that child’s age, she would still miss her mother, and unfortunately, there’s only men at Maou’s place right? Suzuno living next door can’t seem to handle it, and Maou and I both like that child, so when there is a need, she would come at stay at my place. Of, of course we have also explained properly to Maou’s relatives.”

“Oh.....even though it feels a bit strange.....since the situation is like this, it’s not as if I don’t understand.”

“In addition, even if that child also likes Chiho, but no matter what, we can’t leave a child at the house of a high school girl right?”

“I feel that leaving it to a lady who isn’t your girlfriend is already strange enough.”

Rika looked like she still could not accept, but was eventually willing to back off.

“Then, regarding that futon for children, don’t tell me Emi is paying for it?”

“About those expenses, it will be paid by Maou.”

Actually he only paid half of it, but even if she told Rika, it would be pointless.

Rika crudely chewed on her fork, and thinking for a while, she said,

“A futon is considered bedding right? Talking about bedding, Nishikawa Bedding would be the first thing which comes to mind, but considering the economic situation of Maou-san, perhaps it would be rather difficult.”

“.....Nishikawa huh.”

Nishikawa Bedding is more than 400 years old, it is an old Japanese brand and the largest manufacturer of bedding, it can be said that when it comes to bedding, people will think of Nishikawa.

“Considering the time period children can use it, perhaps it’s considered a little expensive. Why don’t you take this chance and just buy a larger one directly? She’s called Alas=Ramus right? That child is quite big already right?”

“True.....uh, Rika, have you seen Alas=Ramus before?”

Emi, who did not remember letting Alas=Ramus meet Rika, asked this in confusion.

“.....Oh, no, I only deduced it from what Emi said.”

Even though Rika seemed to hesitate for a moment, it should be a trick of the mind.

“Ah, that’s right, Even though going to a specialty shop is rather expensive, but if you go to a children’s product store like Ryomatsuya, there should be a discount even if it is Nishikawa made right? Actually if you really want something cheaper you have to buy online, but since it’s something for a child to sleep in, there should be some considerations for how it feels.”

“Ryomatsuya?”

“Eh? You don’t know? It’s a specialty chain selling various children’s clothes and daily products.”

“I don’t know. Even though I tried searching on the internet yesterday, all I found were shopping websites.”

Emi took out her phone, trying to search for the shop name Ryomatsuya.

“Ah.....I really do not have any impression of seeing any in the city centre. It feels like that kind of store will be opened in the suburbs or the residential areas in the city fringe.”

Rika drank her after meal iced coffee, and put it down like she suddenly thought of something.

“Then again, the closest station to Emi and Maou-san’s house with Keio line right?”

“Eh? Y, yeah.”

Rika shouted loudly, and Emi, busily using her mobile phone’s small screen to search for shops got a fright and almost dropped her phone.

“Since it’s opened in the suburbs or residential areas in the city fringe, do you want to try going to Seiseki-sakuragaoka or Minami-osawa side to search for it?”

“Eh, why?”

Emi had seen these names in the route map inside the trains. She remembered that Seiseki-sakuragaoka is a Limited Express train station, and Minami-osawa is in front of a train interchange route.

Even though the station nearest to Emi’s home is the Keio line, but it is actually Eifukucho station on the Keio Inokashira Line.

From Shinjuku, after three stops on the Keio line, Emi will transfer trains at Meidaimae station, so she was not very clear on the stations after Meidaimae station on the Keio line.

“Around Minami-osawa, there is a large specialised outlet. Even branded items is sold very cheaply there. Eh, even though it doesn’t seem to have anything to do with futons, in addition, in front of Seiseki-sakuragaoka, there are many shopping centres under Keio, and there are many products from expensive to cheap ones, and it’s rather fun to walk around.”

“Shopping centre in the suburb huh.....”

Emi mumbled a bit, then started to search the station name which Rika mentioned.

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“Hey, Alas=Ramus, take off your shoes.”

“Ah-um, no~~”

“No, you’ll dirty the train seats like that.”

“Uu----”

Emi grabbed the small feet of Alas=Ramus who wanted to look outside the window from her train seat, planning to forcefully pull the sandals off.

Even though Alas=Ramus resisted for a bit—

“Hey, Alas=Ramus, be good and listen to Mama.”

“.....Uu~~okay.”

But after she was chided by Maou sitting on the other side, the young girl obediently nodded and gave in to Emi’s manipulations, and once her feet were free, she immediately kneeled on the chair to look out of the window.

“Seriously.....why is she so obedient to Papa’s words.....”

Emi held the sandals which were taken off and turned to look at the scenery which Alas=Ramus was currently looking at.

“This is the difference of accumulated authority.”

“A Demon King wearing T-shirt and shorts, and even sandals shouldn’t have the right to talk about authority and things like that.”

“It’s hot today. And fathers on holiday should be like this right.”

Maou surveyed the interior of the train after saying this and Emi also imitated his actions.

“.....Using your young appearance to say these words, it feels a bit strange.”

But it was useless even if they continued to discuss this topic.

An announcement within the train said the next stop was Chofu, and Emi sighed after hearing this like she had given up.

They were on the Keio line on a weekday, on the Limited Express train towards Keio-hachioji station.

As it was a train departing from Shinjuku on a holiday morning, the train was still considered crowded, not knowing if it was considered good luck or bad luck, Emi, Alas=Ramus and Maou were seated together in one line.

Maou only found out from Emi during the weekend that they are going to a place called Seiseki-sakuragaoka station to buy Alas=Ramus’s futon.

If they set off from Sasazuka, they need to transfer to the Limited Express train at Meidaimae station, but in the beginning, Maou hesitated about this journey.

After all, just from the route, it can be known that this place is very far away from Sasazuka.

Even if Emi claimed the products there are a lot of product choices, regardless of quality or price, Maou still could not understand it that well.

“I want to go out with Papa.”

However after Alas=Ramus said this through the phone, when Maou came to his senses, he discovered that he had already agreed.

It was only after Maou hung up the phone, did he think that if he went out with Alas=Ramus, then Emi would definitely come along.

“.....What’s with that note of yours?”

Maou, who did not bring anything else besides his wallet and mobile phone, was holding a piece of paper in his hand, and Emi asked when she saw this.

“Yeah, it’s a shopping list, Ashiya said to buy them if they’re cheap.”

Emi took the note which Maou passed to her across Alas=Ramus on reflex.

Once she saw the contents----

“One bag of onions, soy sauce, natto, dish washing liquid refill.....even if it’s cheaper, there’s no need to specially take the train to buy them right?”

“That’s right. It feels like that guy is mistaken about something.”

After Maou shoved the note which Emi passed back into his pocket, he suddenly leaned towards Alas=Ramus and said,

“Alas=Ramus, is there anything outside?”

“Yeah, plane.”

“Oh? Oh, that’s right. It’s so high.”

“And MgRonron.”

“Hm?”

“MgRonron!”

“Hm? What is that?”

Alas=Ramus turned and faced Maou who did not hear properly and tried to explain.

“Uh.....”

“.....She referring to the MgRonalDs sign.”

Emi, who could not continue standing by, spoke up to help.

“What did you say?”

“When you take the train, won’t you normally see the signs on the roads along the track?”

“.....Yeah, that’s true.”

Just as he said this, Alas=Ramus, who found MgRonalds at the plaza in front of the station----

“Papa! MgRonron!”

“Oh, it’s true.”

While shouting a name which one could not tell was a fish or a bird, like a new species of animal, she reported to her Papa.

“After all, the name MgRonalds is hard to pronounce.”

“Recently, she kept making noise about wanting to eat it. Even though I told her it’s too early.”

“Is that so?”

Once Maou asked this, Emi, with a heartfelt expression of aversion, said with a stony face in a position which Alas=Ramus could not see,

“She said that place ‘has the same smell as Papa’.”

“.....Alas=Ramus is really a good kid!”

Ignoring Emi’s unhappy expression, Maou reached over, planning to touch Alas=Ramus.

“Aauu.”

However, Alas=Ramus, who leaned her forehead against the window to see outside, hit her forehead because of the violent shaking of the window in reaction to the wind pressure from the train travelling in the opposite direction.

“U, uwahhhhh!”

The young girl, who got a shock, started to cry loudly.

“Oh, ohhh, did it hurt just now? Are you alright, Alas=Ramus!”

Maou frantically used the hand which planned to touch Alas=Ramus to carry her and did his best to comfort her.

“Sorry, sorry.”

Emi quietly apologised to the people around her, and as there were more empty seats after Maou picked Alas=Ramus up----

“.....Ah~seriously!”

Therefore Emi could only tolerate the cold stares from around her, approach Maou and squeeze together with him.

“.....Sigh.”

Maou and Emi got off at the Seiseki-sakuragaoka platform after a big turn and looked at each other tiredly.

“.....Why is it that even though she can face off with an archangel, she can still cry because her forehead hit the window which got shaken by wind pressure.....?”

“I also.....do not know.”

“.....Fu.....fu.”

Alas=Ramus, who got tired after crying, was currently sleeping in Maou's arms.

Even if they walked from an air conditioned train to the outside filled with humidity, the young girl still did not show any signs of waking up.

“Toddlers are really full of surprises.....”

“Just not worrying about her getting lost, is already considered quite good.....oh my?”

When they were talking, a young couple pushing a baby pram, taking along a child slightly smaller than Alas=Ramus, coincidentally passed by them.

“.....So it can also be done that way huh.”

“But our activity zone has too many stairs and differences in height of the surfaces, so it doesn't feel that convenient, in addition, with Alas=Ramus's age, she shouldn't be able to fit into a baby pram anymore right?”

“That model occasionally can be seen in the store, there are customers who let their children who are almost kindergarten age to sit in baby prams..... oh!”

As Alas=Ramus almost slipped down, Maou swayed his body to adjust his grip on her.

“I do occasionally see those people. But to buy a baby pram suitable for this child’s body size, it might not be that cheap.....”

Emi realised that from an unknown moment onwards, she had already stuck to Maou’s side to watch Alas=Ramus’s sleeping face, and was talking to Maou at the same time.

Once she remembered what had happened in the train----

“H, hey, what’s wrong?”

“.....Ugh!”

And could not help but sit on the bench next to her tiredly.

“Is it heat stroke? Or do you feel uncomfortable?”

Emi, sitting on the bench, looked up and glared at Maou, who seemed to be panicking----

“Like this, we’re.....like a real married couple.....”

And said this angrily at the same time like an angry sigh from deep within her heart.

“.....ah?”

Maou also subconsciously gave a dangerous expression and frowned.

“I say.”

“What.”

“When normal girls say this, they should be a bit more bashful.”

This time, Emi really hoped that she had fainted because of heat stroke.

“Do you wish for me to react that way?”

“How is that possible.”

“.....I’m going to kill you.....sigh.”



Even if her face really looked horrible, Emi still stood up from the bench.

“.....Then in order to prevent this scene from happening in the future, let’s quickly finish our original goal and go back. Seriously, making me mess up my pace like this.”

“Those are my lines!”

They may have said this, but because Alas=Ramus is also present, Maou and Emi still walked down the stairs of the station side by side.

“.....If this scene is seen by Chiho, it would be difficult to handle.”

“Hm?”

“.....It’s nothing.”

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“Oh my, this little girl is so cute! May I know how old she is now?”

“.....”

“A, around two years old! Ahahaha!”

After walking out of the ticket gantry, Maou’s group came to the baby products outlet at Seiseki-sakuragaoka shopping centre nearby.

Emi froze after hearing the female staff member’s innocent question, so Maou could only frantically reply with a stiff smile.

“H, hey, get a hold of yourself!”

“.....Ah!”

Luckily Maou shook Emi’s shoulder who had a slack gaze with his free hand, and things did not become worse.

Right now, Alas=Ramus was lying in Maou’s arms and resting.

“May I know what products the both of you are looking for today?”

“Uh, erhm, we looking for futons which this child can use.....”

Because Emi, the one who is supposed to act as the guide, had not recovered completely, Maou had no choice but to reply.

“Is that so, I understand. Before, did she sleep in a baby cot or something?”

Maou, unable to answer that he let her sleep directly on the tatami----

“Uh, she slept together with her mother.....”

“.....ugh!”

And Emi froze again.

“Hey! Don’t blank out every time you realise the meaning of the word ‘family’!”

“Excuse me.....?”

Maou-san's rebuke caused the staff to become suspicious this time.

"Ah, erhm, it's nothing. Normally, she sleeps in the same futon as her mother."

"I, I see.....together with her mother. If so, then your daughter should be the type to not move much when she sleeps right?"

".....That's true. She is rather placid when she sleeps."

Actually, from Maou's impression, even though Alas=Ramus will cry at night when she was staying at the Demon Fortress, but her sleeping state was not so bad that she would roll around.

"But, is there any problem like this.....?"

"Ah, yes. Because after children leave the baby crib with limited space, their sleeping posture will change a lot. So there are examples of mothers who get a shock because their child who was originally very placid when sleeping suddenly become very active."

"I see."

"But there are parents who do not use baby cots, so for this part, it will differ from person to person. If your daughter does not move much even when resting, then I think that preparing a better quality one for her would not be a problem. Please come this way, I'll introduce the products to you."

"Yeah. Hey, Emi."

“.....Ah, yeah.”

Emi, who had not regained her senses, followed obediently after Maou pulled her sleeve.

The staff brought Maou’s group to a large sized square plastic cabinet, and displayed on it were a few sets of futons with designs which seemed suited for children.

“It comes with a cloth doll as well?”

“This is for the children to hold onto when they sleep. Because when they have something to grab, they feel more reassured.”

After the female staff nodded and replied, she pointed to one of the futon sets.

“The price of this set is 29,800 yen.....”

“20,000.....”

This time it was Maou’s turn to instantly freeze.

“Includes the mattress, with the ability to adjust the contents of the futon and pillow according to the season, and their covers, as well as the addition of a non-irritant towel and cloth doll for children. All this is one set. The products facing each other on the shelf, are split into the two types of futons used for summer and winter as well as their covers, the price of this set is 35,800 yen.”

“Three.....”

“Can these sets be washed directly in a washing machine at home?”

At this time, rather than saying Emi finally regained her senses and helped Maou ask questions.

It was more like Emi’s consciousness registered from the corner of her eye that Maou was opening and closing his mouth like a goldfish because he lacked oxygen, and forcefully continued the interaction in order to maintain the scene.

“Of course.”

The staff nodded with force and looked at Alas=Ramus sleeping in Maou’s arms.

“According to the father.....”

At this moment, Emi used all her effort to tolerate it so she would not lose consciousness because of this.

“Your daughter doesn’t seem to move much when she sleeps.”

“.....Yeah, I feel that her sleeping state should be considered quite alright.”

“For children at your daughters age, as they are still growing, their bodies are very soft, if their sleeping state is too good, it would already cause a burden to their bones and muscles. Even in adults, maintaining the same posture

when sleeping would cause the body to stiffen, and for children, it might affect their development, so the better the sleeping state of the children, we would strongly recommend using futons made from soft material.”

“Development huh.....”

Emi carefully thought about what the female staff member said and looked towards Alas=Ramus, who was being carried by Maou.

And took the chance to light push Maou’s shoulder as he looked at the prices on the shelf in an absentminded manner.

“Hey, you better not cause Alas=Ramus to fall because you’re blanking out.”

Maou seemed to finally returned to reality and frantically used his hands to tighten his grip on Alas=Ramus.

“O, oh! E, even though I can understand what the staff member means, but 35,000 yen.....”

“It looks like you’re still listening.....can I ask you about something?”

“Please go ahead.”

After Emi breathed in lightly, she asked the female staff,

“Even though it’s a basic question, but for a child’s futon, around what age can they use it until?”

“.....Honestly.....”

The female staff replied with a wry smile.

“Even though in certain circumstances, it can only be decided by the child’s development. However, for children to like to move around when they’re resting, even without considering a futon, it would be better to buy a bigger mattress. Basically the products here are targeted at children around 100cm.....”

“Decided by the child’s development huh.....”

“.....Emi?”

Maou agreed with the explanation of the female staff while he felt confused at Emi, who looked at Alas=Ramus with a stern expression.

“.....I understand. Thank you. We still wish to browse around some more, can I get a catalogue for reference?”

“Of course. Please look at more products and research carefully. Let me go and get a few catalogues for you now.”

After watching the staff walk into the storeroom while smiling, Emi said softly,

“Hey, Demon King.....”

“Ah?”

The seemingly lonely expression which Emi showed when she turned around, should not be a trick of Maou's mind.

“Would Alas=Ramus grow up like a normal child?”

“.....”

What Emi wanted to ask should not be whether Alas=Ramus's body to become an adult.

She definitely did not wish to escape the responsibility.

But for Alas=Ramus, who had parents like the Hero and Demon King, which were not blood related to her----

“What would be the better way for her to grow up.....”

Behind Emi, the female staff was holding the shopping centre bag containing the catalogues with a smile on her face, however, in Maou's eyes, this scene was really too surreal.

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“How should I put it, it feels really extreme.”

Maou mumbled as he walked along the corridor of the fourth shopping centre.

“Even though I thought 30,000 yen is too exaggerated, the price in the next store suddenly dropped to 3,000 yen, this actually leaves a bad feeling..... why don't we take the middle, and choose one around 15,000 yen?”

“That 3,000 yen one is an afternoon nap set used by day care centres right. It’s totally different from the futon sets for children to sleep properly at night. Then again, even though you have always been such a miser, why are you suddenly so generous?”

Maou answered Emi without hesitation,

“I was only confused because I saw such a high price at the beginning. Even though it would be troubling if it’s too expensive, having it too cheap makes one feel uneasy.....”

After saying this, Maou looked towards the area next to her feet.

“Papa, what is it?”

“.....Ignoring adults like me, Ashiya and Urushihara, since it’s for Alas=Ramus to use, of course I would hope to buy something better.”

Emi, like Maou, also looked towards the area next to her feet.

Alas=Ramus, who just woke up from a short afternoon nap, was currently holding Papa and Mama’s hands, moving her feet with all her effort to follow the both of them.

“Yeah, Alas=Ramus, there are stairs in front, you have to properly grab Mama’s hand okay!”

“Oh!”

“Eh? Wait.....”

Alas=Ramus grabbed Mama’s hand tightly, and Emi gripped back on reflex.

“Yo-sha!”

“Ye~~yah!!”

Maou and Emi both pulled Alas=Ramus in the middle onto the stairs.

Alas=Ramus grabbed onto the hands of Papa and Mama and cheered and smoothly landed on the top of the stairs.

“.....ugh!”

“Hey, Emi, you should be used to it now! It would be like this all day today.”

Maou said in a relaxed manner to Emi who could not help but kneel on the spot.

“Mama, are you okay? Is it hot?”

In addition, with Alas=Ramus also starting to worry about Emi, it became harder to accept.

“Alright, Alas=Ramus, since Mama seems to be tired, then let’s go eat.”

“Eat!”

Alas=Ramus held onto her parents' hands happily and shook them back and forth happily.

“MgRonron!”

“Hm? MgRonalds might still be too early for Alas=Ramus.”

“No, I want MgRonron!”

Even though it was not known by MgRonron meant to Alas=Ramus, this young girl seemed to be very stubborn with regards to MgRonalds.

“Hey, did you let her eat it before?”

“I did not, but not just MgRonalds, this child seems to be sensitive to the smell of all fast foods.”

“Smell huh.....”

Maou remembered when Alas=Ramus met Kisaki----

“The same smell as Papa.”

And said this.

“Hey, Alas=Ramus.”

“What is it?”

“Why do you want to eat MgRonalds?”

Maou, who suddenly felt curious, asked, and Alas=Ramus replied in a cheerful manner,

“Papa’s smell!”

““.....””

Maou and Emi could not help but look at each other.

“Ne, Mama, we’re sleeping at Papa’s house today right?”

“.....Let’s eat first okay?”

Emi changed the topic in order to avoid Alas=Ramus’s pure gaze, and lowered her head in a lonely manner.

“.....Hey, Emi.”

“What is it.....”

“Are you feeling depressed?”

“.....Ah?”

Maou suddenly asked this randomly, making Emi truly confused.

Maou, who did not expect Emi to react this way, suddenly felt bad.

“Uh, erhm, I was thinking if you feel jealous or something because Alas=Ramus only cares about me.”

“.....I say, I’m not that self-centred. Ah, look, there’s a map over there. Why don’t we take a look to see where we can get lunch?”

“Y, yeah.”

The direction Emi pointed in, is the restaurant guide inside the shopping centre, and at the same time, there were a few families happily discussing what they should eat for lunch today.

“She originally lived at your place, so missing you is a natural thing to feel.”

“O, oh.....”

“I’m just troubled if I should prioritise the ‘Hero’, or the ‘Mother’.....let me see what Alas=Ramus can eat.....”

In front of the guide panel, Emi stared at the meal photos recommended by every store, and replied nonchalantly.

“.....I feel kind of bad like this. To me, whichever side taking precedence is no different to me.....how about soba?”

“You don’t have to feel bad at all. Didn’t I say so before.....the soba in that store is expensive? Since it comes with tempura.”

“What does that mean? Hm.....tempura huh.”

“It doesn’t mean anything.....then again, is it alright for you to eat outside? Do you have money?”

“Hm, I may look like this, but I do have money on me. Every month, I can freely use a portion of my salary, and for every workday, I can get 300 yen of allowance. As long as I don’t use it that day, I would be able to save 300 yen per day, it’s fine even if I eat tempura with Alas=Ramus.....eh, were we discussing about this just now?”

“We were discussing what to eat for lunch right?”

“Uh, I remember that we’re discussing a more serious topic.....”

“Oh, that issue. I just feel that it’s useless even if we talk about it, so it would be better not to.....spaghetti, I’m a bit sick of eating it.”

“What. Try talking about it then.”

“MgRonron!”

Amongst the listed stores, Alas=Ramus, with sharp eyes, spotted the MgRonalds symbol and shouted happily, for unknown reasons, Emi showed a somewhat happy expression and looked sideways at Maou.

“If even more than ‘Demon King’, you’re willing to prioritise being a ‘father’ and give up on conquering the world and living in Japan for your whole life, then I do not have to be so persistent.”

The scene that day suddenly surfaced in Maou’s mind.

After finishing an evening shift, the intersection at Sasazuka.

The Emi at that time, what kind of feelings did she have when she said this to the enemy who killed her father whom she put her life on the line to chase after----

“If you’re willing to live out the rest of your life in this country, and there is no need for me to see you as an enemy.”

At that time, Alas=Ramus was not here. The Demon King and Hero were just enemies.

In reality, the new fates between these two people, who did she think about this?

Wrong, no matter what she thought, what could be confirmed was that Emi truly did not wish for others to think that she and Maou are husband and wife.

But how about with regards to ‘as the mother of a young girl’.....?

“.....Hey.”

“What?”

“For MgRonalds fries, as long as you tell the staff beforehand, you can ask them not to add salt. Why don’t we let Alas=Ramus eat a little.”

“Eh? Why so sudden?”

“In addition, there should be a lot of people in every store anyway, why don’t we bring to out there?”

Maou did not answer Emi’s question, and pointed directly to a point on the map of the area around Seiseki-sakuragaoka which was located next to the restaurant guide.

“Ne, Alas=Ramus.”

“What is it?”

Maou slowly picked up Alas=Ramus, who had looked up and answered him, meeting her gaze and said,

“Let’s go have a picnic.”

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“The wind is so strong!”

Emi pressed down her hair being blown around by the wind on reflex.

“It’s a river!”

“Oh, this place is rather spacious.”

The three of them were currently at the bank of the Tama river.

Below the Keio line overpass on the right side, there was an organised park, soccer field and tennis court, and the scenery looks very beautiful.

“Why is that area of grass over there the only area which isn’t landscaped?”

“I see that there are people currently barbecuing meat on the other side, but it seems like it can’t be done in the park on this side, so what standards to they use to differentiate them?”

There was a large bridge on the left side, and a large group of people barbecuing meat could be seen near the pier of the bridge.

“Papa! Park! Park!”

After seeing the leisure facilities installed at the river bank, Alas=Ramus’s eyes instantly shone.

“Yeah, but let’s eat first. The chairs nearby aren’t taken up, let’s go there.”

Maou, carrying Alas=Ramus, walked in front of Emi, and walked down the river embankment first.

His goal was the old wooden bench which would fit the family of three nicely.

Luckily, that bench was under a large tree, so it looked like it could also provide some shade.

“.....Alas=Ramus knows what a park is huh.”

Emi said in surprise.

“I have never taken her to one before.....”

“When she was still staying at my house, Ashiya and Suzuno seemed to have taken her to the park near the apartment before a few times yeah?”

“Mama! Swing! I want to play on the swing!”

As for Alas=Ramus, she stretched her body out beyond Maou’s shoulders like she could not wait to run off.

“Because we’re always merged.....so it feels like every time I go out with her, it would be to work.....”

Alas=Ramus could not stay still and surveyed the wide river embankment around her, and cheered at everything she saw, seeing this scene, Emi felt a little pain in her heart.

“She did accumulate a lot of stress after all. Looks like I have to reduce my shifts a bit.....”

“If the current situation is still manageable, it’s best not to do such a thing.”

After letting Alas=Ramus sit on the targeted bench, Maou gave the MgRonalds takeaway bag to the young girl.

After Alas=Ramus used both her hands to receive it, she hugged the paper bag with shining eyes.

“MgRonron!”

“Of course, it would be best to stay with her 24 hours a day. But for us, we would still have to work in order to earn money. When Alas=Ramus was still staying at the Demon Fortress, I also did not have much time to play with her at all. I left it completely to Ashiya and Suzuno to take care of her.....hey, Alas=Ramus, stretch your hand out. You have to wipe your hands before eating.”

Maou squatted in front of the bench, and as he used the wet tissues bought from a convenience store to wipe Alas=Ramus’s small hands, he looked up at Emi and said,

“Sit. You also want to eat right.”

“.....Yeah.”

Emi obliged and sat next to Alas=Ramus.

“Yo-sha.....alright, Alas=Ramus, what do you have to do before eating?”

Maou sat on Alas=Ramus’s other side, and looked down at the young girl.

“Oh! Let’s eat!”

Without even finishing the sentence, Alas=Ramus had already opened the small paper bag from MgRonalds and grabbed a piece of fries out.

“MgRonron!”

Inside the bag, there is only a box of small fries.

The remaining was different flavoured rice balls decided by Emi from a store which provides takeaway services.

“Emi, here, this is tea.”

What Maou passed to Emi is a bottled tea from the 100 yen store.

Emi took the tea after some hesitation, and after opening it, drank one mouthful.

“.....Ah, it’s delicious.....”

After confirming the brand on the bottle, Emi discovered that she had never seen the name of the manufacturer or the brand name before.

“I rather like this brand. Even though convenience stores sold this in early spring, perhaps because it didn’t sell that well, it was taken off the shelves immediately, it was only recently did the 100 yen store sold it with the price of two bottles for 100 yen. Sigh, but before the end of summer, it would probably disappear again.”

Maou laughed and at the same time, opened up the bottle with the same brand and started to drink.

“Hey, Alas=Ramus, you’ll be thirsty if you only eat fries. Drink some tea.”

“Gurgle.....oh.”

Alas=Ramus, eating unsalted fries with big mouthfuls, placed her mouth against the bottle Maou held over, and after drinking a big mouthful with her small mouth, she swallowed.

“.....With both of you like this, it’s like a real father and daughter.”

Under the rays of the summer sun, a young father, sitting on the bench under the shade of the tree, was feeding his young daughter tea.

Other than that, Emi could not find any other words within her to describe this scene.

“It’s good if I could be one.”

“.....Eh?”

Unable to judge if Maou was answering her, Emi momentarily faltered.

“When you normally act as a mother, don’t you act like one as well?”

“Eh.....er, erhm, that is.....”

Can this sentence be taken as praise?”

“I have never thought about it before, about how long I can be with Alas=Ramus.....and Alas=Ramus.....”

It feels like the sounds of the families playing in the riverbank park suddenly became faraway.

“would she be able to always stay by our side.”

“.....Demon King.....”

“Pwah! Mama! Rice ball!”

“Eh, ah, yeah.”

Under the request of Alas=Ramus, who swallowed the tea and fries, Emi placed the container containing the rice ball and the free gift of pickled radish in front of Alas=Ramus.

“Oh, eating pickled radish from the start, Alas=Ramus is so mature.”

“I like, pickled radish.”

Alas=Ramus ate the pickled radish with large bites with clear chewing sounds.

“.....It seems like as long as has the colour of ‘Malkuth’, she would like it.”

“.....I see.”

Maou replied Emi’s explanation with a wry smile.

Alas=Ramus has a preference for yellow things.

The core of Alas=Ramus’s existence, is the ‘Yesod’ Sephirah orb which makes up the world, and yellow is the colour of her comrade ‘Malkuth’.

The mother is the Hero with the mixed blood of an angel and human, the father is the Demon King of the demons, as for the daughter, Alas=Ramus, she is a personification of a Sephirah.

With relations like this, it would be impossible to continue with perfect relations like normal human families, this is the obvious truth.

“But, it would be useless if we live a hesitant life every day because of this. Right now, it is impossible for us to abandon Alas=Ramus, and.....”

Only at this time, Maou looked at Emi’s eyes in a steadfast manner and said,

“Since you have no plans to kill me with the holy sword, thinking about separating from Alas=Ramus is unnecessary. Thinking anymore about it would be useless.”

“.....Ugh.”

Even though it was stated so clearly, Emi was still unable to retort.

The sword skills practiced to fight the Demon King and the holy sword which was obtained.

And Alas=Ramus contained within the holy sword.

If she used the holy sword to cut down Maou now, it will be the same as letting Alas=Ramus be covered in the blood of her ‘Papa’.

“E, even so.....that doesn’t mean that I have already given up on fighting you.....!”

This definitely does not mean that Emi had already forgiven Maou, and also does not mean that she had given up on her goal of fighting the Demon King.

Even if Emi used a heavier tone to emphasise this, Maou's calm smile did not change at all.

“Don't be so worked up. I don't plan to take advantage of this to do bad things. Hey, Alas=Ramus, don't grip it so hard.....ah! You broke it up.”

“Ah, ah, the bonito flakes have all dropped out!”

When the two of them looked away to talk about serious topics, it was already too late.

Alas=Ramus squeezed the bonito flakes rice ball, and the rice ball fell apart entirely just like that.

“Ah, it's sticky. Come, Alas=Ramus, give the rice ball to me. Hey, Emi, you should have disposable chopsticks right?”

“Ah, Yeah. Hey, Alas=Ramus, how can you make such a mess with the rice ball. Come, open your mouth.”

“Ah!”

Emi put the broken up rice ball she barely managed to save back into the container, and used disposable chopsticks to feed it to Alas=Ramus bit by bit.

“.....Sigh, when we’re busy handling these things, we can’t be considered Demon King or Hero at all.”

“.....”

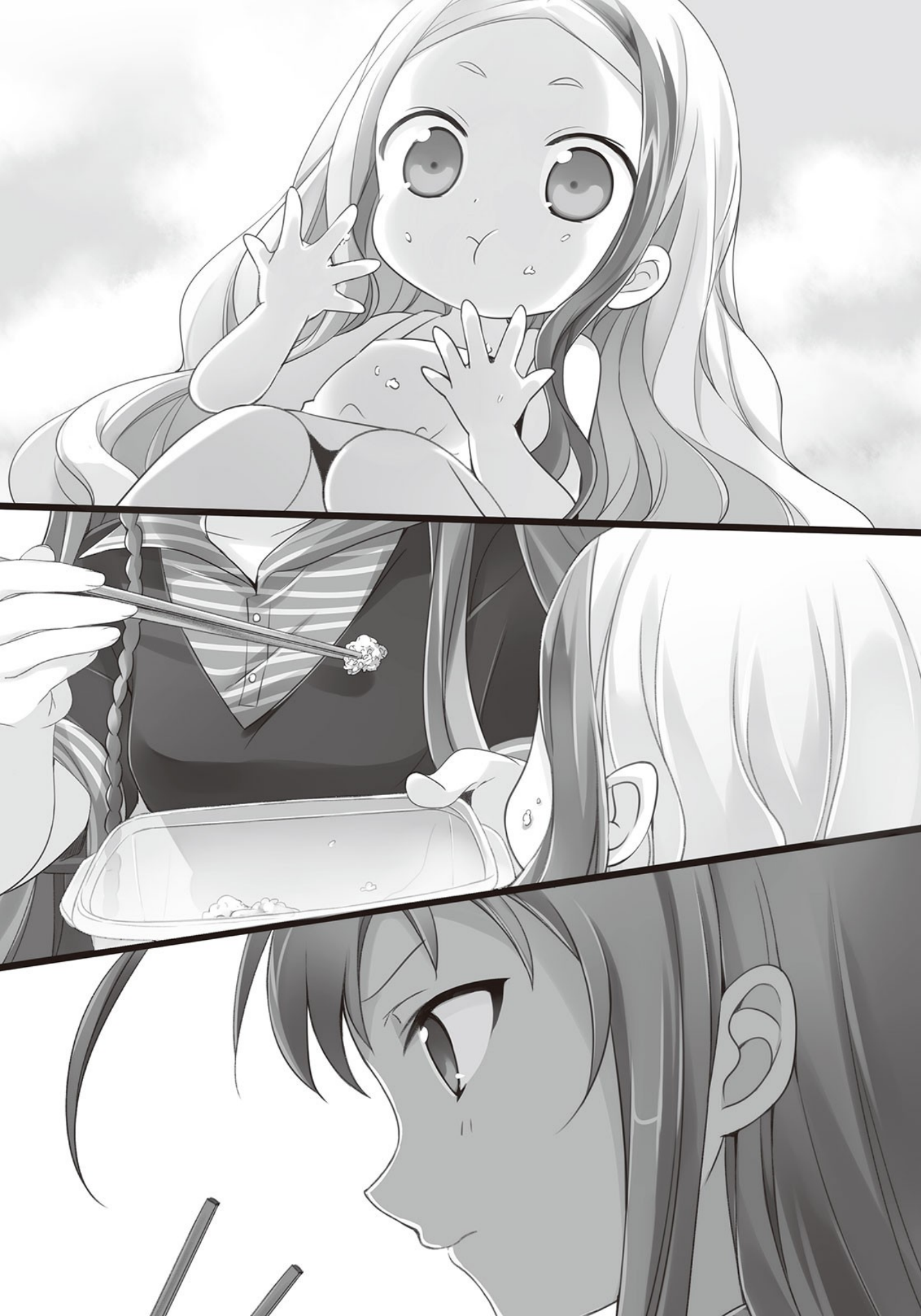
Emi pretended to focus on feeding Alas=Ramus, intentionally ignoring Maou’s voice.

It feels like if she agreed with Maou’s words, it will cause her to feel like she lost.

And Maou seemed to not mind Emi’s reaction, and as he picked up the rice grains on Alas=Ramus’s clothes and put it in his mouth, he shouted loudly,

“The weather’s so good!”

He did not speak to any particular person, and said what he felt as he looked at the sky.



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“Ah~so tiring, hey!”

“.....”

Even if it's already 6pm in the afternoon, the sky of summer evening is still bright.

Maou, who got off at Sasazuka station yawned hugely and mumbled softly.

As for Alas=Ramus, she was sleeping soundly in Emi's arms.

After eating lunch, accidentally forgetting the original purpose, Alas=Ramus, who played at the riverbank park leisure facilities until she was dead tired, fell asleep immediately once she got on the train back home.

Even if there was wind blowing at the riverbank, it could not change the reality of having a picnic under the sun, Maou and Emi, who were very tired, boarded various trains at the stations and returned to Sasazuka.

“Sigh, then Emi, I'm sorry, can I trouble you to take the futon catalogues to my house. I have to explain the situation to Ashiya.”

“.....”

Emi could have changed trains at Meidaimae station on the way and gone home.

But because she was asked by Maou, she specially came to Sasazuka.

In the end, the two of them at Seiseki-sakuragaoka station, unable to choose which futon to buy for Alas=Ramus, after thinking about it, still choose the expensive set of futon at the beginning, however since the two of them are sharing the cost, Maou said if he did not consult Ashiya first, scary things might happen later.

Even if she could not tolerate this Demon King who had to go with the mood of his subordinates even when buying things, as Emi originally did not plan to make an immediate decision, she agreed that there was a need to discuss about it.

But on the return train, Maou was so tired that he slept.

And ever since Maou woke up at Sasazuka, Emi's mood was bad, causing him to mind it very much.

After all, no matter what Maou said, Emi did not react at all.

“Hey, your face is very red. Don't tell me you forgot to apply sunscreen?”

Maou looked over casually and discovered that underneath the white rays of the summer evening sun, her face was a little red for unknown reasons.

Maou, who remembered the strong sunlight at the river bank asked carelessly----

“.....I say.....”

But Emi's deep and cold piercing stare caused him to shut up immediately.

“You actually.....you actually dared to.....”

“O, oh?”

Emi was shaking for unknown reasons.

And anger flared up in her eyes.

Emi opened her mouth which looked like it could breathe fire any moment, abruptly approached Maou and said,

“You actually dared to keep leaning in my direction? Aahh?”

“Oooh? Eh? Re, really?”

Even though Maou, who went to sleep once he sat down, did not remember anything, Emi would not say such a meaningless lie.

“You still dare to ask me! How are you going to compensate me for humiliation I endured when an old lady who got on at Sakurajosui station asked ‘The whole family going out together? Your relationship with your husband is so good’!”

“Uh, that.....”

Even if Emi was blushing furiously, she still shouted softly in order not to wake Alas=Ramus.

Seeing her aura, if she was not carrying Alas=Ramus, she might have just grabbed the front of Maou’s shirt.

“A, a few times I used my shoulder to bump you back, but every time the train stops, you would just lean over again.....se, seriously, I almost thought I would die because my face caught on fire!”

“O, oh, I’m really sorry.....”

“Actually I wanted to change trains at Meidaimae station, but because you and Alas=Ramus are asleep, there’s nothing I can do, this really is.....I hate this, idiot!”

“H, hey, everyone is watching!”

Emi was lecturing Maou in a worked up manner while blushing and her voice grew louder and louder.

“L, look, Alas=Ramus is going to be woken up by you. Hey, ca, calm down a bit, let me help you carry Alas=Ramus, breathe deeply a bit.”

“I, I have always been calm.....!”

Even so, Emi was passed Alas=Ramus to Maou, and exhaled deeply at the same time.

Even though they could sit down in the train, Emi, who could not relax at all, tried to move her stiff body, and stretched in order to calm herself down, just as she looked away to ignore Maou----

“Ah.”

“Ah.”

“.....ah.”

Her eyes met with a person passing by, and following that, whether it was Emi, Maou or that person, they froze on the spot.

“Maou-san, Yusa-san and Alas=Ramus?”

That person is Chiho.

Sasaki Chiho, wearing her school uniform, stared at the three of them in shock.

“Chi, Chi-chan?”

“H, hello, Chiho.....”

Maou and Emi did not expect to meet Chiho at this time.

“What is it? Why is everyone here?”

Chiho asked calmly.

“Ah, yeah, erhm, we went to buy things.”

“Buy things?”

“T, that’s right. Even though it’s something Alas=Ramus needs, b, but I am unable to decide on my own.”

“I see. That’s true. After all, the environment changed after moving to Yusa-san’s home.”

Chiho, who knew Maou and Emi’s true identities, also knew Alas=Ramus’s true identity and situation.

So she did not react that much to Emi and Maou going out together.

“.....Fwah.....un.”

At this time, Alas=Ramus woke up in Maou’s arms.

“Ah, Chi-nee chan, ‘orning.”

Alas=Ramus, bleary eyed caught Chiho’s figure at the edge of her vision.

For reasons unknown, Maou and Emi suddenly thought the same things and predicted what will happen next and felt chills down their spine.

“Good morning, Alas=Ramus-chan. Where did you go today?”

Chiho asked nonchalantly, and Alas=Ramus, who liked her Papa and Mama the most, answered honestly,

“I went on a picnic with Papa and Mama.”

“Eh, pic.....picnic.....eh?”

Chiho subconsciously looked at Maou and Emi’s faces.

“Fwah.....I played for a long time, today, I’m going to sleep.....with Papa and Mama.....fwah.”

Alas=Ramus, who was not fully awake, with the terms which she choose terrifically, caused Chiho to freeze on the spot.

“Eh? Maou-san, with Yusa-san.....?”

“No, no, Chiho! Things aren’t like that!”

“Ca, calm down a bit, Chi-chan! Think about it carefully, how is it possible for me to sleep with Emi?”

Maou and Emi’s frantic explanations, could not reach Chiho’s ears at all.

Because Alas=Ramus said one sentence before that and struck the fatal blow.

“.....We, went to buy a futon.....fu.”

“Fu.....futon.....”

“Chiho! Chiho, wake up!”

“Yu, Yusa-san.....ar, are you really going to be, become a family, with Maou-san.....”

“How is that possible! Who wants to become a family with that kind of guy.....”

“I decline on my end too!”

“Eh? Papa? Mama?”

“A, Alas=Ramus? N, no, Papa and Mama aren’t quarrelling.....”

“Th, three people going to buy futon together.....is Yusa-san, planning to move to that apartment? All, all of you are going to become one family?”

“Chiho! Calm down! Calm down first, I’ll explain to you from the beginning!”

“I don’t want Papa to quarrel with Mama.....wahhhhhh!”

“B, but.....I, I, if you both of you decided this.....then I won’t say anything.”

“I said you misunderstood! Chiho, calm down a bit!”

“A, Alas=Ramus! D, don’t cry, things aren’t what you think it is, ah! Seriously!”

The chaotic scene of the Demon King and Hero not knowing which side to handle first, continued for more than ten minutes after that.

“.....Demon King-sama, Emilia and Sasaki=san.....what are you making a ruckus at the train station for?”

It was only after Ashiya, who suddenly appeared, interjected with a tired voice, did the commotion get suppressed.

“I see, you went to buy a futon for when Alas=Ramus-chan stays over.....”

After listening to Ashiya explain Maou’s activities today on the walk from the station back to the Demon Fortress, Chiho’s suspicions were finally dissolved.

Maou and Emi, their heads lowered tiredly, followed behind Ashiya and Chiho.

As for Alas=Ramus, she was sitting on the child’s seat on Dullahan II which was being pushed by Ashiya.

“But I got a shock. Because Maou-san and the others really look like a family.....”

“Don’t talk about it anymore.”

“Don’t talk about it anymore.....”

“.....The both of you have such rapport.”

The low voices heard from behind caused Chiho and Ashiya to give wry smiles.

“Then Demon King-sama, may I know if you bought Alas=Ramus’s futon afterwards?”

“Ah.....I asked Emi to come here because I wanted to discuss this with you.”

“.....In other words, it's not cheap at all.”

Even though Ashiya frowned immediately----

“But since it's a futon for children, then it's better to buy one of higher quality. I heard that sleep during childhood will affect the bones and other areas.”

“Sigh, including this part, it's better to discuss it in more detail when we go back.....”

However, after Chiho, who helped the Demon Fortress in various ways, reasoned with him, Ashiya's attitude also softened.

“Then again, Ashiya, who did you call just now?”

Maou asked Ashiya like he suddenly remembered this.

It was not a coincidence that Ashiya had appeared at the scene of conflict with Maou's group, he seemed to have gone to use the public phone at the station.

“I only went to confirm an arrangement with someone I know, it's nothing of much significance.”

Ashiya turned the corner after replying, and the lights of Villa Rosa were a short distance ahead.

“Bell was worried you know. She was afraid that Demon King-sama and Emilia would quarrel when buying things.”

Before Maou and Emi could answer----

“Papa and Mama cannot quarrel okay?”

Alas=Ramus, sitting on the child seat of the bicycle, had already turned behind first and looked at the both of them with stern expressions.

“Sigh.”

“Sigh.....”

‘Papa’ and ‘Mama’ sighed with complicated expressions on their faces.

“Alas=Ramus-chan is right, it would be good if everyone can continue getting along.”

“This.....even if it is Sasaki-san’s opinion, I still find it hard to agree from my standpoint.”

The human high school girl and Demon General walked side by side on the road under the evening sun, talking about unimportant topics.

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“.....I don’t want to go to work.....”

Emi gave a complaint which did not suit her usual style, walking amongst the morning crowd at Shinjuku.

In the end, everyone gathered like this at Suzuno's room for dinner, then Alas=Ramus proposed once again that she wanted to sleep at the Demon Fortress, causing Emi to spend a lot of effort to placate her and go home.

Even though Ashiya expressed that he felt troubled about the price of Alas=Ramus's futon, but with convincing from Chiho, he finally decided to buy the Nishikawa made futon.

Once Emi thought about having to narrate the experience to Rika, who have her information, equivalent to causing trouble for herself, she could not get motivated at all.

'Can't the futon topic be ignored like nothing had happened'----with these negative thoughts, Emi sat on her own seat.

".....Ri, Rika?"

But Emi was immediately shocked when she discovered that Rika, sitting beside her, had a different from usual dazed expression on her face.

Rika was normally very energetic on the morning, and it was rare for her to blank out with her mouth half open like right now.

"Rika? Is anything wrong?"

".....Ah, Emi, good morning."

Rika's reaction was very slow.

What happened? Compared to yesterday, it was as if Rika had become a different person.

“E, erhm, Rika. About the futon.....”

“Futon.....? What does that mean?”

It looks like Rika had a serious condition.

Even though she was so interested in the topic, it looked like she did not care at all right now.

“What’s wrong? Are you sick?”

This time, Emi asked worriedly.

The normally energetic Rika, why would she end up in such a depressive daze.

“I.....think I don’t understand myself anymore.”

“Eh?”

“Ne, Emi.”

“W, what is it?”

Rika’s voice was so small it was as if it could disappear amongst the rings announcing the start of work.

“The people who did not have mobile phones before, do they go through feelings of anxiousness just like me.”

“I, I don’t really understand what you’re saying.....”

“Yeah, sorry, it’s nothing, it’s about time to start work.”

Rika, who tried to cheer herself up, put on her headphone microphone with a lack of certainty.

“Even though Emi’s situation might also be complicated.....”

“Y, yeah.....”

“But being able to freely converse when one wants to, it actually is a very important thing.”

The thing which troubled Rika, must be all included into this sentence.

However, Emi did not have time to think about the meaning behind this sentence-----

“.....Thank you for calling, this is the Docodemo customer centre, my name is Yusa, I will be the one assisting you from now on.”

A phone call immediately came to Emi’s machine, and the strange mysterious feeling she felt this refreshing morning was quickly swallowed up by the busy daily activities and disappeared without a trace.

END

Short Story 4: Work! High School Girl –a few days ago—

はたらく女子高生 - a few days ago -



A gust of cold wind blew in from an open window, causing a piece of paper next to a person's hand to fall on the floor.

“Ah!”

The owner of the piece of paper frantically wanted to pick it up.

Even though its content is not something that would be troublesome if someone saw it, it was also something which could be causally shown to everyone.

Accompanied by the low sound of a chair sliding on the wooden floor, the owner of the piece of paper got up to stretch her hand towards the floor----

“Ah!”

The girl looked up when she discovered that someone else had picked up the paper first.

The person who appeared in front of her----

“Hm~”

was her friend, and that friend was currently looking at the contents of the piece of paper while frowning with a serious expression on her face.

“H, hey, Kao-chan! Don't look!”

The girl called her friend's nickname and frantically tried to take the piece of paper back.

“No, I’m not going to return it.”

The friend answered childishly.

“Kao-chan!”

“Sasa, what’s up with this?”

“What do you mean?”

Studying at Sasahata North High School second year class A, the closest friend to the girl, whether in class or club activities----Tokairin Kaori unhappily shoved that piece of paper back to ‘Sasa’.

“It’s all above 85!”

“Wah! You’re too loud!”

“Nothing will happen even if these scores were heard by others! Unlike me, my average scores are below 60!”

Kaori shouted seriously, she pretended to hug ‘Sasa’'s shoulders, and circled behind jokingly strangling the girl’s neck.

“Actually getting such good scores with such a clam face, you model student! Share some of your brains with me!”

“Wah, ugh, hey, Kao-chan, Kao-chan?”

“Oh?”

“.....Isn’t this strange? I should have shared with you right?”

“.....O, oh?”

The girl did not let the opening Kaori revealed when she guiltily looked away past.

She snatched the result slip from the mock exam mercilessly given after the spring break, and ducked to free herself from the arm wrapped around her neck.

The girl quickly circled behind Kaori, grabbed her friend’s left arm and raised it, pressed her body lightly against her friend’s back, and then----

“Wah, hee hee hee! Ugh, wait, Sasa, no tickling! That’s illegal!”

The girl restricted Kaori’s shoulder movement while tickling her sides.

“The parts which may come out in the exam, I should have already taught all of it to you, didn’t I already split up some studying time to you? After the spring break club activities ended, what have you been doing?”

“Ahahahahaha, er, erhm, I surrender, don’t tickle anymore!”

Kaori, who was unable to stand the tickling attack, patted her thighs, announcing her surrender.

As the girl originally was not serious about it, she promptly let go of Kaori.

“Fu, fu, oh my, I did study, and Sasa’s teaching method is easy to understand, but, that, I didn’t have much time.”

Kaori smiled stiffly, and said her excuses with a finger twirling in her hair.

Kaori’s normal results were not considered bad, but since even Kaori was like that, then about how about the other person?

Just as a bad feeling surfaced in the girl’s heart----

“Oh, how amazing, Sasaki, your mean deviation is more than 60!”

Someone picked up the mock exam results which the girl got back from Kaori after much effort, and shouted in surprise, the girl looked back----

“Emura-kun.”

And discovered that the person is Emura Yoshiya, the person who is one desk number ahead of her.

Tokairin Kaori and Emura Yoshiya are her classmates since first year, and also comrades from the archery club.

As the desk numbers in the school are listed by mixing the boys and girls and arranging them by 50 tones, so at the beginning of the term when the seats have not been changed, the three people with consecutive numbers are seated together in one row.

“Yoshiya, how did you do?”

Kaori asked Yoshiya.

“Ah, me? Failed in English and Japanese, other subjects barely over 50 marks.”

Yoshiya replied unconcernedly.

“Yeah, I won Yoshiya!”

“.....Emura-kun.....”

Compared to Kaori, who clenched her fist in joy, the girl’s shoulders slumped and she sighed.

“Oh, Chi-chan is depressed again.”

“Probably because Emura failed again? There doesn’t seem to be many people in the Archery club, it feels a bit pitiful.”

Comments from the surrounding people who understood the three people very well since last year were heard.

“Sasaki, Sasaki Chiho, are you there?”

Suddenly hearing someone shout her name, the girl----Sasaki Chiho, looked up with a tired look on her face.

Looking carefully, the teacher in charge of Kanji, Andou, was waving at her from the door.

“I’m sorry, please give this out.”

Chiho was not the class representative or held any other positions in the class, but for unknown reasons, she was frequently asked by various teachers to do miscellaneous things.

What Andou-sensei passed to Chiho was a stack of documents made up of 3 pieces of paper stapled together.

The title on the top wrote ‘To Guardian Second Year Three Way Talk, Things to Take Note’.

The April of just being promoted to second year of high school.

A season where the feeling of spring can be felt, but the winds are still cold such that people did not want to let go of their winter clothing.

The school life of Sasaki Chiho’s second year of high school, a normal life not much different from middle school, raised its curtains.

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“Even if Yoshiya got bad results, Sasa doesn’t need to be so depressed right? That guy didn’t even prepare for the exam right? Sigh, even though I, who studied but ended up getting delicate marks, have no right to say this.”

Kaori comforted Chiho, who looked worried.

However, with regards to Yoshiya, who shamelessly said that he failed two subjects, what Chiho was worried about was actually other things.

“.....Once I think about the upcoming midterms, I can't treat it as someone else's problem. Even though I really want to believe that he's alright.”

Chiho sighed with a heavy tone, Kaori looked at Chiho's face, and spoke like she discovered something,

“Hm, that's true.....ah, Sasa, there's ketchup on your face, here.”

Kaori pointed to the area next to her mouth, Chiho, who discovered that the corner of her mouth was stained with ketchup from the hamburger she was biting, quickly grabbed a paper serviette to wipe it off.

The two people were currently at the place they will pass by on the way home from school, the MgRonalds in front of Keio line Hatagaya Station.

After club activities or on the way home from school, Chiho and Kaori would frequently patronise this shop.

Even though it might be difficult to judge accurately just based on the snack expenditure standards of high school students, Chiho always thought that these products, which logically should not be much different from other food stores or other MgRonalds, the ones at this store were particularly delicious.

“If it is a regular exam, as long as Emura-kun accepts one remedial class, then he would have to stop club activities right. Everyone in the club will be troubled like this.”

“That’s true. After there’s only three of us club members in the second year, even though there would still be juniors joining later, if the only boy in the second year is like this, then we can’t be an example for them.”

Kaori ate her fries while agreeing with Chiho’s worries.

Sasahata High School, which Chiho and the others study at is considered a school which places more emphasis on going onto higher education compared to the metropolitan high schools nearby, and in the past, there was one person who got into Todai University.

Therefore the school specially emphasises that a student's role is to study, as long as they fail in more than three subjects in a regular exam, unless there are special circumstances like participating in national competitions, they would be banned from participating in club activities for a period of time.

The archery club which Chiho, Kaori and Yoshiya joined did not have a lot of members, luckily because the three of them joined last year, they were able to avoid the disbanding of the club.

Even though there were not many high schools with specialised archery dojos in the country, and the environment already looked rather good in terms of facilities, but the number of high school archery athletes in Japan were not high to begin with, and amongst student spots, the basic equipment for this sport is classified as the more expensive kind.

Now other than the three people including Chiho, there was only one male and female senior in third year, the teacher in charge was useless as well, without any experience in archery.

Therefore in terms on instructions, they could only rely on their seniors, graduates, and voluntary work from the Dan grade people nearby a few times a month, however even so, there was still a limit on how much they could improve.

With this, if they were unable to get more than three male juniors to join this year, the males would not even be able to register for official competitions.

Because it is this situation, Sasahata High School is not a strong school, forget about national competitions, the best result they achieved was Top 16 at the City Competition more than 10 years ago.

So if Yoshiya fails at three subjects at the next midterm, he would be immediately forced to stop club activities.

Like this, it would affect the morale of Chiho, Kaori and the new members, if club activities were stopped close to a competition, they would be unable to practice properly.

Chiho did not feel like she would be able to give her whole high school life to archery like in sports manga, but since she got into a sport, she hopes to compete with full preparation.

Because of this, Chiho was very surprised that Kaori's results did not improve at all this time.

Logically, Kaori should not be the type who would busy herself until she neglects her daily activities.....

“I feel bad as well, even though I’m not looking for an excuse, but the reason for me letting Sasa’s teaching efforts go to waste is partly because of club activities.”

“Eh?”

Kaori pouted, slumped on the table, and said,

“I, was working during the spring break.”

“Eh? Working?”

Chiho said in surprise.

As Sasahata High School did not ban working, so Chiho did hear of her classmates taking up regular work.

But the subject this time is Kaori, making Chiho feel interested.

“Eh, what work did you do? Why did you suddenly want to work?”

Chiho could not help but lean over and ask, so Kaori smiled with a rather troubled expression,

“Ne, my archery skills aren’t as good as Sasa, so the arrow would frequently bend, and also, changing a bow does require quite a bit of money right.”

“Ugh, I, I don’t shoot that much better.”

Chiho was not being humble, but sincerely felt that way. Recently, Chiho was able to let the arrow fly straight and ‘touch’ the target at a competition distance called ‘near target’, but she felt that she still had not reached the standard of comprehending a ‘bullseye’.

(T/N: Near target is approximately 28 meters.)

Even though they are second year club members, but the three of them including Yoshiya are still novices like when they started learning last year, so the difference in skill between them was not that much.

“Ugh, but when Sasa was shooting the practice target, your arrow barely bends at all.”

Kaori used her right hand to assume the posture of shooting at the practice target and said.

Even though the practice target looked simpler to shoot than a regular target, but if they did not aim accurately, a cheap arrow was still bend very easily.

“And the practice bows prepared by the club, the length does not suit me at all. So I started work because I wanted to buy an equipment which suits me.....sorry, even though you specially took time during revision to teach me.”

“I see.....I feel rather sorry, actually not knowing anything.”

Chiho, who no longer felt surprised, felt a certain admiration for Kaori this time.

In Chiho's eyes, who had not worked before, Kaori seemed to have matured.

"It's alright, it's my own problem after all. Sasa was able to improve steadily just by using practice arrows, so you're much more capable compared to me."

"It's nothing like that....."

It was not a joke, it does cost a lot of money to learn archery.

Even basic equipment for students would require at least 50,000 yen for a complete set, Chiho also felt hesitant in the beginning because of this.

Because with Chiho's situation, unless she asked her parents to help pay for her, she would be unable to obtain equipment to enter the club.

However, Chiho's father---Senichi, who is a police officer, seemed to feel very happy because his daughter picked a martial arts club able to train her heart and body, and to Chiho who decided to discuss with him, he consented to her joining the archery club without any protests and went to an archery equipment shop to help his daughter buy a set of bow and arrow equipment.

Even though Chiho said, 'A cheap one would do', but her father, as a police officer with a Dan in archery said,

"If you use something that is too cheap in the beginning, the growth later on will slow down."

And then helped her prepare a set of equipment which could be considered the highest grade in terms of standard pricing.

Thankful for her father's attentiveness, Chiho not only treasured all the equipment very much, she also remembered to maintain them.

But like Kaori said, bow strings and arrows are consumables, and the cost of maintenance also costs quite a lot.

Even though there are durable arrows made from aluminium alloy, but the tensile force of the bow, the physical stature of the shooter, the weight of the arrow itself, this balance differs from person to person, so to gather a set of cheap bow equipment is not an easy thing to do.

“.....But, it's amazing.”

“What is?”

“I have never thought about working for the sake of equipment which suits me.”

The reason why Chiho choose to enter the archery club was because she thought it was cool.

Of course, one of the main reasons was that Sasahata High School did not have choir, which Chiho joined in middle school, in addition during the period of time in first year where the clubs recruit new students, she had felt touched from seeing that third year president assuming the basic posture for shooting----‘Kai’.

At that time the bow the club senior used at the martial arts performance, was not made of carbon fibre like what Chiho and the others were using, but a

beautiful bamboo bow which looks like a white material could just seep out from deep within the bow.

“Don’t praise that person too much. I resigned in the end anyway.”

Chiho recalled about past events a bit, and Kaori said unhappily.

“Is it short time work, or daily pay?”

Chiho, who was not clear about how working is like, tried to ask with words she vaguely remembered.

“It’s neither. I worked at a family restaurant, but I resigned later because it was too laborious.”

Kaori sipped on her orange juice and replied with a stony face.

“Family restaurant?”

Even though it is classified as a family restaurant, other than large scale franchises around Hatagaya and Sasazuka, there were other countless restaurants.

“Even though I don’t want other people to say I have not resilience, but the job was really out of this world. And the customers are scary.”

“Is that so?”

“Sigh, even though there wasn’t much time to learn anything, I have to officially start work around the third time I came. Isn’t there a handy terminal

specially used for ordering food? There are a ton of buttons on top, and four options will come out for each button. Because there were spring promotions on the first and third day, so the options have all changed, making me spend a lot effort just to help customers take orders.”

“Oh.....but at the beginning, isn’t there a ‘Training’ nametag to wear?”

Chiho recalled seeing such a thing at a family restaurant a long time ago.

Kaori shook her head with an exaggerated expression on her face,

“Customers don’t care about such a thing. When Sasa ordered just now, you didn’t carefully see the employee’s nametag right?”

“No, I do read it you know? Even though I don’t know how to read it, but the last name of the black haired guy, the first word is ‘Ma’, the back is ‘Ou’. And there was even B Grade Employee written on it.”

Chiho looked at the black haired male employee who helped her take her orders, looking like a model ‘McDonalds’ employee straight from a television commercial, from afar.

“.....Sasa is a special case. Normal people won’t look at all.”

(T/N: Question to everyone, do you look at the nametags of the people who serve you? ^_^

Proof-reader’s Note: My customers stare very very intently at my nametag...I think it’s because my name is unusual.)

Kaori looked at Chiho in a rather frustrated manner for unknown reasons.

“Anyway, even if you ask me, who is still in training, what is added in the spaghetti, or how many calories there are in sundae, I won’t be able to answer right? I didn’t read it.”

“But normally, aren’t these information written in the menu?”

Chiho asked nonchalantly, and after that Kaori suddenly got up, stretched across the table, pointed to Chiho’s nose in a gloating manner and said,

“That’s right! You think so as well right? They didn’t read at all! Actually not reading the menu and asking directly, ‘What does this store have’, I don’t know what these people are thinking at all.”

“Oh.....I see. But is there so many of those people? When I go to buy things or eat, I have never seen them.....”

Chiho, who could not grasp the reality of what Kaori said was not even able to finish what she said when Kaori leaned over again and said,

“Have you seen for 6 hours continuously? There are such people every day. And those kind of customers are considered good, there are others who use the drinks bar like they’re free, and lose their temper once you remind them; or complain that the plates used this time are different from the previous time, even if you ask me these things, how would I know about this!”

Kaori’s aura did not show signs of dissipating, and Chiho could only continue playing along.

“The most troubling thing is, because the store was filled with customers during lunch time, and there was a group of people waiting outside, so I told

a salaryman who came in ‘I’m sorry, the store is full now, please wait in order’. But that person actually asked me ‘I have to wait? Why?’ Don’t you think that is strange?”

“.....That’s really out there.”

Even if she felt it was hard to believe, as Kaori is not the type to exaggerate, they should really be salarymen like this.

“Right? Because that guy can’t understand Japanese, so not knowing what to do, I could only remain speechless, and in the end, he actually asked me to ‘call the manager’ in a very pissed off voice. Without any other choice, I could only asked the manager to come, and because that time period was super busy, so even the shop manager lost his temper at me.”

“Eh?”

“And when the shop manager is not around, only me and a senior is left at the hall. When me and him are around, the desserts aren’t made by the kitchen, but the staff at the hall. But even though he didn’t teach me anything, he suddenly threw a manual at me to ask me to make sundae, how would I be able to make one? I don’t even know where the ingredients are!”

Kaori kept complaining. Like being asked to do things that she had never learnt before, and being lectured after failing at it; or even though her evil hearted senior is very free, he wouldn’t come over to help, anyway, she didn’t have good memories of this working experience at all.

Even though she knew her friend chose to resign after being unable to tolerate these things, Chiho, who suddenly thought of a question, still asked her friend,

“Then did they give you your pay? Didn’t you resign after working for less than one month?”

“At least they still gave it to me! But because it was calculated with the hourly pay of a trainee, and I resigned after around half a month, so I didn’t get a lot! Ah! Anyway, it really sucked!”

Kaori pushed the McDonalds tray, which she had finished the food to the side, and slumped back in the sofa in an exaggerated manner.

At this time----

“Miss, if you have already finished your food, can I help you clean up the table?”

A voice was heard from next to where the both of them were seated.

After Chiho and Kaori looked up on reflex, they momentarily sucked in a breath.

Someone dressed differently from the other employees, who can only be described as a ‘beautiful lady’ was standing in front of them.

That lady has a lithe body, and had porcelain white skin, adding onto that a low voice full of charisma, she looked like a fashionable model.

Chiho looked at the nametag hung on the lady's chest which she discussed with Kaori earlier, 'Shop Manager: Kisaki' was written on top.

Chiho thought about the reading of the lady's last name.

Next that shop manager who even had beautiful posture, after politely taking away the tray when Kaori nodded dazedly, left after bowing.

As quite some fries and a drink were still left on Chiho's tray, even if they still stayed here for the time being, they did not have to feel bad about it.

"Wah~ that person is really pretty."

Kaori was still staring at the back of the shop manager.

"If I can meet that kind of shop manager, I would probably stay longer. The shop manager of the store I worked before, he wouldn't work when he sees that they are no customers. And he still told me, try to find something to do when I'm free. He should be the one working properly!"

Only after that female shop manager disappeared behind the counter, Kaori finally turned her head back to Chiho's direction.

Chiho replied with a wry smile,

"But I often heard before that the work at restaurants and convenience stores are very difficult, but after all, work is doing something you're not familiar with. But for me, who has never worked before, saying this is a bit strange."

“That’s true. But I feel that if you’re scolded by the manager or someone for all the little things, you would still lose motivation right. Ah, it’s annoying! I definitely don’t work to work in a family restaurant anymore!”

After declaring this loudly, she slowly took out a stack of documents from her school handbag.

“Then again, even if you tell of to think about our future path now, we should not have that much idea right?”

That was the document which Andou-sensei asked Chiho to give out, the content was a notification of a three way talk between the student, homeroom teacher and guardian, and the survey stapled at the back.

As it is a survey about future paths, so it is expectedly asking students to choose to continue higher education after high school graduation or finding a job after, and giving a reason underneath, and this survey forms seemed like it would be used as a reference during the three way talk at the end of the month.

“Sasa should want to go to university right?”

“Yeah.....probably.....”

Chiho nodded and vaguely asked Kaori’s question.

Having to think about the future path after graduation after just being promoted to second year, caused Chiho to feel rather troubled.

“Yoshiya would definitely not qualify for university, so he would probably graduate directly, what should I do. I already confirmed that I’m not going to choose a family restaurant anyway. But reason.....even if I want to continue further education, I don’t know what I want to study.”

Chiho’s feelings were exactly the same as Kaori’s.

Talking about universities, other than famous universities like Todai and Kyodai, Chiho also wanted to get the names of the schools which got the first few places in the road relay competition which her father went to watch during the New Year.

However, even so, to Chiho, who did not even have any working experience, getting into employment was an area even more foreign than university.

“Ah, but Sasa’s breasts are huge, and you look cute too, as long as you walk around Harajuku, perhaps you’ll get scouted by talent agencies right? Why don’t you just join the show business?”

Kaori suddenly said jokingly.

“I say.....”

Kaori would frequently tease Chiho about her breasts so she is already used to it.

Even though a lot of female friends are jealous about Chiho’s breast size, but she sincerely thought that being big chested had no advantages at all.

Not only it is easy to mess up her posture when shooting or get it hit by the string, even the inner wear her mother buys for her is so expensive that she felt bad or something which does not look cute at all.

Even though Chiho had not experienced stiff shoulders, even if she saw tops she likes and the shoulder area and sleeves fit, she always had to give up on them because they could not be buttoned up around the chest or her chest shows between the buttons.

“How is that possible. Be more serious. This has to be shown to our parents after this.”

Chiho ignored Kaori’s joke with a serious look on her face, took out a similar document from her bag and started to flip through it.

“I totally forgot that it needs to be shown to the family! Then I don’t know what to write anymore!”

Kaori grabbed her own head, feeling very troubled over it.

The ambition box in the survey form was especially big. Seeing this, Chiho thought of essay questions where the word count basically has to be at least 80% of the specified word count, causing her to start worrying about it.

Chiho had a similar feeling when she was in middle school, this vague term like future path would always cause her emotions to become ambiguous.

Why Chiho wanted to enrol into Sasahata High School in the beginning, was simply because this school fitted her academic ability was close to her home, not because she wanted to learn anything special in this high school.

On the future path guidance survey in middle school, she did honestly write this on the form, but she was asked by her homeroom teacher to write a more formal reason.

Even though it was not what Kaori said, Chiho remembered that there were students who said that they wanted to join the show business or become an athlete on the survey form, but in the end, their parents and teacher told them, ‘Don’t dream such impractical dreams’.

But on the contrary----

“If the occupation one wants to do the most is a civil servant, it feels that person has no dreams at all.”

Such a saying being circulated amongst the masses, really cannot be agreed with.

Even though one would be seen as an idiot by others for chasing one’s dreams.

Chiho’s father is a civil servant known as a police officer, so from her viewpoint, she felt that ‘being a civil servant means having no dreams’, this saying is looking down on people whose goal is her father’s occupation, but this caused her to be more confused about what the adults meant by ‘future path’.

“Even so, I don’t have anything in particular I wish to do in the future.”

“Hm? What’s wrong?”

“No, nothing.”

Even if she felt angry about the unreasonableness of the adult’s word, even if she was asked, ‘Then do you have any amazing ambition’, Chiho would not know how to answer.

Because in reality, she did not have any.

Even though everyone says that you can enter a good company when you graduate from University, but since the television was reporting news about the bad economy and difficulties in finding jobs everyday like a mantra, even if it was a high school girl, she also knew that a job cannot be found based on results alone.

On the internet, it can be seen that some people are arrogantly saying that studying in university is useless when going out in society.

If so, why do so many companies all want to accept graduates from first rate universities, thinking about this, Chiho was more confused about what future path is.

(T/N: Luckily I have already been through university and found a job, or else I might just get depressed reading this section.)

Chiho placed the survey form at the corner of the table, picked up the paper cup holding her drink, and as she thought that she probably did not look that cute when she frowned, she planned to suck a mouthful of drink in the cup.

At this moment, she noticed the advertisement underneath the survey form, placed on top of the tray.

“.....Looking for working comrades.”

As long as it is the MgRonalds tray paper, advertisements for hiring would be printed on top.

“Sasa?”

“.....Kao-chan, through working, you should have learnt some things which have to do with society and not taught in school right?”

“It’s nothing like that. I just know that working is tiring and troublesome.....”

Even though Kaori was not wrong, but to Chiho, who did not have any worries in her life due to the care of her parents, even if it was for a short time, her friend, who interacted with a world she did not know, seemed to be closer to the adult’s world than herself.

“Look at this, if I start working as well, I might understand things related to future paths or work.”

Seeing Chiho point towards the MgRonalds hiring advertisement, Kaori shouted in surprise,

“Eh? Stop joking around, it’s better if you don’t do such a thing. Did you not listen to what I said just now?”

“Uh, but.....that’s not the only reason, just like what Kao-chan said, I also want to buy better archery equipment.....”

“Even though letting your parents pay for the arrows does make one feel bad, but it can’t be helped, with Sasa’s results, even if you wait until you get into university before you start working, it won’t be too late.”

“Hm, that’s true.....”

The white bamboo bow and arrow used by the already graduated senior surfaced in Chiho’s mind.

Of course that senior did not use that set of bow and arrows every time, but if she also started to work and earn money, she might get closer to that beautiful bow.

And if she could take the chance to understand a bit about working, it could be considered killing two birds with one stone.

“Not only does Sasa’s have good brains, you’re not lacking in spending allowance right? You don’t usually spend a lot of money anyway.”

Kaori seriously tried to dissuade Chiho.

“Even though it’s not because I feel anxious.....”

However, even the school results praised by Kaori and Yoshiya, was not at the standard of being the top five in the whole school.

Chiho could not deny that there was actually an urge to challenge new things nested somewhere in her heart.

At this moment----

“Ah!”

Chiho, who was thinking and did not notice her surroundings, could not help but shout out.

A salaryman, who passed by the two of them, because he did not adjust his shoulder strap properly, his bag propped up on their table, hitting the paper cup Chiho was holding.

Even though it did not hurt, Chiho still dropped the cup because of the surprise and impact.

As the two of them were here for quite some time, the lid of the paper cup, which had turned soft, loosened once it was dropped from a height, the cola which spilled out instantly spread to the corner of the table, wetting Chiho's document.

“Oh!”

The salaryman seemed to realise his mistake and the surprising thing was still to come.

When the two of them looked up, they discovered that the salaryman in front of them was not Japanese.

A bearded burly white man, was currently saying something to the both of them, but Chiho, because an important document was stained, she was unable to react at all.

“W, w, what do we do?”

“Sa, Sasa, are you alright? Uh, that.....”

Kaori, who was worried for Chiho, also did not understand what the foreigner said.

“Uwah, the document is dirtied.....what to do, then again, how do you handle this situation?”

“-----!”

Chiho, Kaori and the white man knew that it was a bad situation, but the difficult thing was that they could not communicate.

After the man felt troubled for a while, he took out a handkerchief to pass to Chiho, it would be alright if only the clothes were dirtied, but if the paper was already made wet from the cola, it would no use even if the handkerchief was used to wipe it.

Just as Chiho and the rest did not know what to do, and froze on the spot because they did not know what order to handle the situation in front of them----

“Miss, may I know what happened?”

The voice of a young man saved this situation.

Chiho, who looked up because she had an impression of the voice, discovered that the black haired male who took her order at the counter earlier had rushed over here. The store employee, who leaned over between Kaori and the white male, looked rather surprised at the puddle of cola on the table, and asked Chiho in a concerned manner,

“Are you alright? Did your clothes get dirty.....”

“E, erhm, I’m fine.....”

“Ugh, Sasa, how is this fine, what do you do with your document?”

At this moment, Kaori finally picked Chiho’s document up from the cola puddle.

“B, but it can’t be helped, since it’s already this wet, even if we borrow a towel from the employee.....”

Just as Chiho stared at the paper which had softened and became stained from absorbing water----

“-----!”

That white man started to say something again. But even if they know that the other party was speaking English, Chiho and the others, who did not have the ability to converse in English, still did not understand what the man was trying to say. It was useless even if the other party apologised anyway, and just as Chiho planned to say ‘it’s alright’ to the man----

“This gentleman wants to apologise to you.....”

The employee with the nametag ‘Maou’, a last name with an unclear way of pronunciation, suddenly said this to Chiho.

“Eh.....?”

“-----!”

“I’m sorry, it’s because I was not careful. This man says he wants to compensate you. This document, is it handed out by the school?”

“Yeah, it’s a document related to counselling about the future paths to take.”

Kaori answered for Chiho, who was too shocked to say anything, and after the employee looked at Chiho and Kaori’s face in turn with a rather surprised expression-----

“That is her school document which is guidance counselling.” (T/N: Actual English text in the novel, looks like the author’s English improved after Vol 5. Remember ‘Here have fork, ha?’ XD)

He suddenly started to converse with the white man in fluent English.

“Oh.....really?”

Once the white man heard this, he covered his face in an exaggerated manner.

“I’m sorry, may I know if the document which your comrade has contains the same contents?”

“Eh? Ah, that, that’s right, how did you know that?”

The employee replied apologetically,

“Excuse me, because the voices of both of you could be heard from the counter.....so honestly, I heard everything.”

“S, sorry, disturbing you like that.”

After hearing the employee’s explanation, Chiho, who felt embarrassed, bowed her head in apology.

The employee shook his head with a warm smile and said,

“How about this? From how I see it, these documents seem to be normal printing paper. If your comrade’s document has not been written on, you can consider borrowing it from her to a nearby convenience store to photocopy it.....”

“Ah.”

“Ah.....”

Chiho could not help but nod with open mouths, thinking carefully about it, this was an easy thing to do, but not even thinking about this method to handle this, it could be seen how frantic they were from this accident.

“Sir, her friend has a blank document. Would you copy this by a pay copier?”

After the employee said a string of words, the white man raised both his hands and said something.

“Because he’s afraid of dirtying it again, so this gentleman seems to wish for your friend to go to the convenience store with him. I will go as well, if you do not mind, can I ask this young lady to come along?”

“Ah, okay, no problem.”

Kaori, who seemed to have calmed down a lot, after she nodded, she took her document and stood up.

“This uncle would help to pay for the photocopying fees right?”

“He said even if you want to print 100 copies, it is fine with him.”

Even Chiho could tell, that the content which the employee translated last, was a joke which suited the style of foreigners very well.

“Then I’ll be back soon, just wait here for a bit.”

“Shop manager, I need to accompany a customer out for a while.”

Kaori and the employee, after speaking to Chiho and the shop manager behind the counter, the three of them walked out of the store.

Thanks to the employee with an unknown last name pronunciation, ‘Maou’, the initial chaos was solved in an unbelievably smooth manner. Even though

Chiho breathed a sigh of relief because the document could finally be saved, the incident did not end here.

“Miss, excuse me for disturbing.”

The beautiful shop manager came to Chiho to talk to her, and bowed with a beautiful angle.

“May I know if your clothes were dirtied?”

“Ah, hm, my clothes are fine.”

“Then I’m relieved. Even so, my apologies for having this incident happen when you are happily eating. If you do not mind, I can give you a new set of drink and fries, would you like that?”

“Eh, it, it’s fine.”

This time, Chiho really got a shock.

After all, the shop did not do anything which needs to be apologised for.

Rather than that, because that ‘Maou’-san was around, Chiho was able to know that the white man wanted to apologise, and successfully saved the document, so Chiho thought that the person who should be thankful is her.

If she even let the other party help her change to new drinks and fries, she would feel very bad.

After Chiho honestly said her thoughts, the female shop manager shook her head with a warm smile and said,

“Our job is to create an environment where customers can eat comfortably within the store. So we should try our best to prevent troubles between customers, not only is this our job, it is also our responsibility. So Maou..... that employee just now should help customers to solve their problem.”

So that male employee's name is read as 'MAOU'. Chiho looked back at the door which the three people walked out of earlier.

“More accurately, giving your friend trouble, is what makes me feel bad. If both of you are going back for today, as long as you show today's receipt the next time you come, you would be able to redeem the same items, what do you think about this?”

The female shop manager smoothly said these sincere words.

To Chiho right now, compared to the commotion which occurred earlier, the personalities of the shop employee who accurately read the situation and solved the problem with fluent English, and the shop manager who apologised to her sincerely, moved Chiho even more.

Even though she did not plan to criticise Kaori's previous workplace, but it feels like if it is the store these two people are working at, the atmosphere should not be the same as what Kaori had gone through, making a workplace comrade have unhappy memories.

More importantly, to Chiho, who thought the job of McDonalds employees is just to make hamburgers, the explanation of the shop manager who said, 'job is to create an environment', felt refreshing to her.

“Receipt.....”

Chiho took out the receipt which she put in her wallet subconsciously, and looked at the contents printed on it.

And discovered a certain piece of information on it.

“That’s right. Later, as long as you bring that receipt, no matter when.....”

Even if the shop manager still wanted to continue explaining with regards to Chiho’s receipt, when Chiho came to her senses, she was already asking a question completely unrelated to the receipt.

A telephone number was written at the bottom of the receipt, as well as the words hiring workers.

“Erhm.....”

“Yes, what is it?”

If the content has to be more exaggerated, what Chiho said to the shop manager at that moment, greatly changed her destiny later on.

“May I know, if this is the telephone number of this store?”

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“Working at Mags?”

“Kao-chan, you’re too loud!”

“Eh, Sasaki, you want to work?”

The next day, after Chiho went to school, she told Kaori and Yoshiya that she followed the hiring advertisement of the MgRonalds in front of Hatagaya station to apply for it.

Therefore, the both of them were predictably shocked, leaned closer to Chiho and said,

“Eh, but that kind of thing just happened yesterday, right?”

“That incident has nothing to do with the store, and that uncle also apologised a few times afterwards.”

“Um~I don’t care okay! I have already warned you! The days when you’re unlucky will be very arduous!”

“Sasaki should be more capable than Tokairin. Let’s not care about that first, Sasaki, if you’re accepted, I’ll be go there as a customer.”

“Uwah, Yoshiya, do you have the right to say these things? Is it this mouth? Is it this mouth which said I am useless?”

Just as Chiho, who was sandwiched between the two of them, wanted to try stopping Kaori from rushing over to grab Yoshiya----

“But, why do you suddenly want to work?”

Yoshiya tried asking.

Chiho placated Kaori, who was threatening Yoshiya, and replied at the same time,

“Wasn’t the future path ambitions form given out yesterday? Honestly, if this goes on, I do not think I will be able to say anything meaningful during the future paths counselling. But if I try to work and earn money, I feel that I would be able to understand things about this society and working.”

“I feel that it’s not much use.”

Kaori, who had a bad working experience, said with a stony face. Chiho could only give in wry smile in response.

“And there’s still the same motive as Kao-chan----I also want to have money, whether it is used to buy archery equipment or other things.”

“That’s true, I also want money too.”

“Yoshiya, if you start working, it’s not something which can be solved with failing two subjects.”

“.....Sigh, perhaps it may really turn out like that.”

Kaori said harshly, however, Yoshiya, who could normally dismiss it casually, actually replied with a serious face this time, causing Chiho to feel concerned.

“But regardless of whether I failed two subjects, or twenty subjects, only both of you would get angry at me. Honestly, I am quite envious of Sasaki who can be so serious about the future.”

“.....Emura-kun?”

“Since you know we’ll get angry, then work harder a little!”

Yoshiya showed a rather lonely expression, causing Chiho to feel very concerned, as for Kaori, she just criticised Yoshiya like normal.

“Both of you won’t be participating in my three way talk anyway. Sigh, the day of the three way talk, will my parents really come?”

“Eh? What do you mean?”

Sasahata High School, who emphasised on future paths counselling, even though they had some flexibility regarding the attendance date, the guardians seemed to be strongly encouraged to attend the three way talks.

“Sigh, because my parents don’t seem to be that interested in me.”

“Eh?”

“Ah?”

Yoshiya said quickly, even though the two people who did not know the situation wanted to know more, Yoshiya changed the topic first.

“Forget about this first, Sasaki, if you are hired, Tokai and I will bring a few classmates to eat there, at that time, please take care of us.”

“Eh? What are you saying, Emura-kun!”

“Oh my, it’s rare to be able to see friends work right? Like Tokai, she would not even tell me where she is working at.”

“Because I know you would do such a thing, which is why I didn’t tell you. My original job already caused me to accumulate a lot of stress, how can I let Yoshiya see me work.”

“Eh, w, wait a moment, it’s not confirmed that I would be hired.”

Chiho could not help but start to stutter.

Thinking about it carefully, other than Chiho, other students from Sasahata High School frequently go to that MgRonalds.

Even though she did not know the reason, it feels like letting her friends see a side different from her usual self in school would make her feel troubled.

“Sigh~ actually telling Yoshiya, Sasa, looks like your luck has run out.”

“D, does that matter, nothing much will happen even if I am seen. If I am hired, I will definitely work properly!”

“Good, then it’s settled. Tell us again when you’re hired!”

It feels like the development of the situation is a bit strange.

Even though she regretted her careless words, Chiho's determination to work did not change.

Yesterday, once Chiho reached home, she immediately contacted the store, causing the shop manager Kisaki, who picked up the phone, to be a little shocked.

Even though such a thing just occurred yesterday, the two of them quickly agreed on a time for the interview.

As for her parents----

“It's alright as long as you can maintain your current school results.”

Chiho also received a conditional agreement.

Chiho subconsciously touched her bag, inside was a resume which she bought at the stationery store before she called yesterday, last night in order to fill in the resume, not only did she repeatedly look at a few model examples, she troubled over it until late at night.

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Perhaps it is because she already knew how the other person is like beforehand.

When she accepted the shop manager's interview in the evening, Chiho did not feel especially nervous.

The two of them were currently in the staff room where customers do not normally enter do carry out a one on one interview.

The shop manager Kisaki Mayumi introduced herself to Chiho once again in the same polite manner as with customers.

Then----

“Please let me look at your resume first.”

Kisaki started to read through the resume Chiho passed over.



The content should not contain anything wrong or strange right, Chiho, who faced this for the first time, felt her heartbeat accelerate because of nervousness.

“.....I see.”

After more than 10 minutes, shop manager Kisaki nodded once and placed the resume on the table.

“Sasaki-san.”

“Y, yes?”

“On top, you said your motive for interviewing is to accumulate social experience through working.”

“Ah, y, yes. Is there anything wrong?”

“No, there’s nothing wrong.”

Shop manager Kisaki looked at Chiho’s eyes directly and asked an unexpected question.

“Do you have any urgent need to accumulate social experience?”

“Eh.....? N, need?”

Chiho was flustered.

She actually expressed that her goal is to accumulate social experience in the interview motive.

Perhaps she discovered Chiho's inner chaos, shop manager Kisaki smiled lightly and continued speaking,

“It's nothing, it just that Satahata High School is considered a school of higher academic ability compared to nearby metropolitan high schools, and you also joined a sports club. So I was thinking why you wish to specially limit the free time outside of studying and school life and rather choose to a more difficult lifestyle of working to accumulate social experience.”

“Ugh.....”

“There's only me and Sasaki-san here. If you don't mind, I wish to know the reason.”

“.....”

Shop manager Kisaki moved the old office chair to face Chiho again, shrinking the distance between them slightly.

Looking at Kisaki's eyes, Chiho felt that she seemed to be able to understand the motive behind the other party's question.

“Future path.....”

“Yes.”

“I am troubled over the path I should take after graduation.”

“Future path huh. You’re thinking of continuing higher education or getting a job?”

“Yeah. Earlier, I talked with my friend about working, and from her, I heard many things which could not be experienced in school at all. Even though I have been studying in school since middle school, but with regards to the path in the future, the more I thought about it, the more I did not understand, then yesterday, shop manager.....”

“Me?”

“Told me at your job is to ‘create an environment’, until now I thought MgRonalds is just a shop which sells hamburgers, perhaps working is actually a concept which is much wider than what I normally experience, even though I cannot express it very clearly.....”

Chiho felt it herself, that the words she is saying now, is more scattered than she thought.

However, shop manager Kisaki did not press Chiho, and only nodded lightly for her to continue.

“Then, just as I started to thinking what is working, shop manager-san told me that I, would be able to exchange for similar products as long as I bring the receipt over, the money I originally used to buy hamburgers, can actually come back to me in forms other than the products, so, I started thinking about money.”

Chiho felt herself gradually losing her calmness.

School, future path, friends, club and family, various things were spinning around in her head, causing Chiho to be confused as to what exactly is truly important.

“Even though I am not sure what form it will be presented in, if I can understand these things by working and earning money, it can at least turn into social experience, so, in the end, erhm.....”

Chiho, who could not calm down, frantically waved her hands and legs, and said loudly,

“I want to work and earn money.”

“.....I see.”

At this moment, shop manager Kisaki smiled in satisfaction for unknown reasons.

“It is just a casual chat, have you ever thought about where to spend the money you earned?”

“W, where? Uh, once I saved enough money, I want to buy a better bow. And arrows as well.”

“Arrows? Even though I’m not clear about archery, but these arrows can only be used once?”

“No, even though it’s not to that extent, it will occasionally snap or bend during practice and become useless, so there is a need to continually replace them. Archery is originally a sport which uses up a lot of money, and I feel

bad if I ask my parents for money every time, and a suitable arrow differs from person to person, so I think if I earn my own money, even if it is more expensive equipment, I would be able to choose freely.....”

After that, there was a period of time where shop manager Kisaki was having a conversation with Chiho with regards to archery, and after 40 minutes of what was more like casual talk rather than an interview, the interview time finally ended.

“Then Sasaki-san, thank you for specially coming down today. As for the results, I will contact you these two, three days.”

“The one who should say thank you is me. Then I’ll be leaving.”

Just as Chiho got up and bowed and prepared to leave the staff room, she discovered that her legs were shaking slightly.

But just as Chiho opened the door and walked out of the room----

“Ah, hello.”

The employee called Maou who helped to solve the conflict just happened to be outside the door and greeted Chiho with a glance.

“I’m shocked. Such a thing occurred yesterday, and you actually applied for work today, how unexpected.”

From Maou’s refreshing smile, he should be expressing welcome.

“Yeah, hello.....”

But Chiho, who totally relaxed after the end of the interview, seemed to only have enough energy for one greeting.

“It’s great if you can be hired. I’m looking forward to seeing you come here again.”

Chiho, who was spoken to when she prepared to go home, was able to make herself nod.

Chiho walked out of the store with shaky steps, and when she could not see the store, she squatted on the ground, grabbing her head.

“I definitely failed.....”

Chiho felt that her reason of wanting to earn money was too exaggerated.

Ever since she walked out of the shop, she kept regretting the fact that not only did she not say the things she ought to say, she also said some things which felt unnecessary no matter how she thought about it.

Especially even honestly revealing that she wanted money and what she wanted to buy caused her to regret it greatly.

This time she must have gave the other party a bad impression.

Even though Chiho originally wanted to show her decorum as much as she could, but in front of someone part of society, she was still unable to break out of the mould of a ‘fashionable teenager’.

“Sigh.....looks like I won’t be able to come to this store of the time being.”

She did not have the courage to enter the shop where she did not pass the interview again as a customer after all.

Tomorrow, she better suggest to Kaori some other places where they could hang out after school.

When the sky started to darken, Chiho, her brain filled with these negative thoughts, went on her way home with unsteady steps.

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Within the MgRonalds store in front of Hatagaya station, after the high school girl applied to work left, it was obvious that shop manager Kisaki seemed to be happy.

“Hey, Maa-kun.”

Kisaki talked to employee Maou.

“What is it?”

“I’ll leave that girl just now to you.”

“Fast! You already decided to hire her?”

“Yeah, even though I didn’t have much expectations at first because her resume looked normal, I’m satisfied with her unexpectedness.”

Kisaki never stopped smiling.

“Please don’t mention the resume thing to me anymore.”

After hearing this, Maou’s face turned stony for unknown reasons. But Kiski, not letting it go, still continued speaking,

“Give up. A resume where the interview motive is ‘wanting to eat good food’, I will never forget it my whole life.”

“Haha.....but, this means that even though the resume is normal, the interview results are very good?”

That high school girl who just walked out of the staff room, looked like just a normal girl in Maou’s eyes.....

“Yeah, it’s rare to find a student who likes it she will stay for a long time. Don’t teach her too strictly okay.”

“My god! This is probably the first time I heard Kiski-san say not to be too strict to someone!”

This is really an unexpected high rating.

“That girl looks like she already takes things seriously. And since she is able to answer that way, I feel that even if we’re strict to her, it won’t have any meaning.”

“You plan to let her improve on her own huh.”

“Yeah. I especially like the way she doesn’t use beautiful words to cover up her own hopes. That’s how the situation is, I’m counting on you from tomorrow.”

Looking at the back of his happy supervisor, Maou mumbled softly,

“Hope huh..... if I wrote conquer the world, it would definitely be treated as a joke and not get hired.....”

Other than an old cashier, no one else heard Maou’s mumbles with a dangerous aura.

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“So, how was your second day of work?”

“Hm.....it feels like my feet are going to die.....ugh.....”

Even if she was currently on the phone with Kaori, Chiho, lying on the bed in her room, still could not help but groan.

Her legs, which she thought were already trained from club activities, were swelling. Whether it was her soles, calves, thighs or soles, they were filled with a tiredness she had never experienced before, even though she already soaked in hot water and massaged them thoroughly, it felt like the fatigue had not gone away at all.

“You were standing the whole time after all. There’s no break in between?”

“No, because the working hours aren’t long.”

“Ah, that’s true, I think if the working hours are not more than 8 hours, there won’t be any break time.”

“Yeah, the explanations about this were mentioned on the first day.....”

As law dictated that high school students can only work until 10pm, the results of the discussion is that on normal working days, it can at most only be arranged from the time school and club activities end until 10pm at night, these four hours.

As for weekends, it is 4 to 6 hours.

When they were talking, Chiho started to remember things which occurred on the first day of work.

Chiho never thought that after answering like that, she would actually still be hired.

Because she was told beforehand that she had to cut her nails, so after Chiho cut her nails in a more careful manner than she would normally, at the appointed time, she headed for the store feeling more nervous than during her interview, and received the contract and the uniform her size from shop manager Kisaki.

The loose design caused her chest to be less obvious, causing Chiho to breathe a sigh of relief.

Seeing herself change into the McDonalds uniform which is normally seen as a customer, and herself reflected in the mirror of the staff room, gave Chiho a strange feeling.

“Then, next, follow me around the store, I will explain to you the usage of the various facilities in a simple manner, and the jobs the various areas are responsible for.

After Kasaki said this, Chiho immediately straightened up.

Even though this store isn't that big, but what you need to remember is still quite a lot.....”

Chiho, who recalled Kaori's previous experience, felt uneasy because she was worried that she might get scolded if she was unable to remember everything in one go. But----

“Because it is impossible to remember everything due to the huge amount of information, so you just need to roughly know there is actually this kind of business. If you feel that there is a need, you can take notes. The first job of Sasaki-san is to first learn various things.”

“Y, yes.”

“In addition, you must wash your hands before you go out to the hall, I will teach you how to wash, so we will start from the tap where you wash your hands.....”

After that, Kisaki brought Chiho around the store once, and explained in order the machine name, area name, room layout, the jobs of the various areas and the places where items are placed.

The notebook in Chiho's hand was quickly filled up with messy notes.

Even though it was a store she had been to many times, there were new terms and new habits everywhere, machines she had never seen, and areas she had never entered.

Just explaining about the store interior required one and a half hours, after that was basic greeting practice, and as a result, three hours of the first day passed just like that.

Finally----

“Hey, Maa-kun.”

Kisaki suddenly waved an employee over (to Chiho, even calling a shop employee as an employee is very fresh).

What is surprising is that the employee who walked over, is that man called Maou who had helped Chiho before.

“Ah, you're the one from earlier.....”

It looks like Maou still remembered Chiho, he took off his cap, and greeted Chiho with a cheerful smile.

“Uh, ah, I, I’m working here from today! I’m Sasaki Chiho! Please take care of me!”

She bit her tongue from the start.

Even though Chiho blushed furiously due to embarrassment, not only did Maou not mind----

“I’m Maou Sadao. Sasaki-san, please take care of me from now on.”

He even answered her in a polite manner.

From the way Maou spoke English and how he treated others, Chiho thought that he should be a lot older than her, but actually after greeting each other face to face, it feels like he is unexpectedly young.

But it looks like he should not be a university student right?

“Because I will not be in the store tomorrow, I wish to get him to help take care of Sasaki-san.”

Kisaki placed her hand on the shoulder of Maou, who is Chiho’s senior----

“With regards to this store, he knows everything, so test him all you want.”

When she got to the second half of the sentence, Kisaki was already saying in a laughing manner.

“Such pressure.”

Maou put on his cap again and smiled in a troubled manner.

“If you teach the wrong things, I won’t let you off!”

Even though it was not known how serious she was, Kisasi still piled more pressure on the mentor.

But even while smiling wryly, Maou still said with a confident expression,

“Don’t worry. Compared to commanding 500,000 people, this is nothing.”

“Eh?”

Chiho was confused over the term 500,000.

So Kisasi shrugged and said,

“If not for the fact that Maa-kun will occasionally exaggerate like this, he would not have any faults.”

For unknown reasons, Chiho did not feel that Maou was exaggerating just now.

“Haha.....but considering that Sasaki-san will be working in this store long term, if there is anything you don’t know, you can ask me, Kisasi-san or other people directly. If you can’t pick up a skill after learning it once, then learn it twice, if twice is not enough, then learn in trice, please remember to consult others. And in our store there is definitely no one who would lose their temper at you because you can’t learn something well.”

“Al, alright.....”

“If someone got angry at you because of this, tell me. I will.....”

Kisaki’s expression suddenly turned into a smile of an Oni.

“let that guy see Hell.”

“Wah!”

That scary smile, caused Chiho to cry out.

“To explain what Kisaki-san just said in easier to understand way, it means compared to causing customers trouble by making mistakes based on a vague impression, no matter how much more work it would take, you should first consult those who know, less harm will be caused that way, please don’t hold back and ask your seniors questions.”

Maou help translate to Chiho, who got chills from Kisaki’s smile.

“Everyone from this store learnt this way, so no matter what you ask, everyone will carefully answer your questions.”

“.....I understand. I will work hard.”

The work performance of Kisaki and Maou as employees, Chiho had already experienced it personally as a customer.

Since the both of them had said so, then the other employees must also be very capable.

Even though Chiho did not feel anxious because of his, she still hoped to develop to a point where she would not drag other people down.

“Uwah.....what is this? Is it Heaven?”

After hearing Chiho’s experience of her first day, Kaori expressed envy from the bottom of her heart.

“Every time I ask, I would be told by others that someone should have taught me already.”

“Ahaha.....”

“Since the first day is like that, then how about today?”

“Ugh.....”

For the first day, other than greeting, it was all learning.

Only today, when she went to work for the second time, she was finally given a more decent job.

“Because I still cannot touch the products, so today, I was cleaning most of the time.”

“Cleaning?”

“Yeah, like wiping the trays with sanitised cloths, wiping the table while remembering the table number, taking the straws, paper serviettes and

specialised takeaway bags out from the storeroom to replenish the shelves with the spares and so on. In addition, I also took the chance to clean up the shelf holding those spare items.....”

“Then did you take out the garbage or anything?”

“They don’t seem to allow me to take out the garbage.”

“Eh?”

“Because the separation of the trash is very strict, so they only let the people who can properly separate the trash to do it, and isn’t there a rubbish bin near the entrance of the Mags? Because I am unable to properly guide customers to their seats and answer questions from customers, so I am still unable to do these jobs.”

“.....It looks like every store is a bit different.”

“Because standing for 4 hours straight is tiring. Ah, just like what Kaori said, I did get asked a very difficult question. Even though I was wearing a huge ‘in-training’ nametag.”

“Experiencing it so quickly. So, what was the result?”

“Yeah, because unless it was really very busy, that senior Maou would be at my side and mentor me, so in the end, it was solved by that senior.”

“Sasa, exchange with me.”

Kaori’s tone was serious.

“But it sounds quite good. Even though I don’t want to learn from Yoshiya, but I will also find time to see Sasa’s working appearance who has become a Mags-nee chan.”

“.....Please go easy on me.”

Chiho, who hang up the phone after chatting about some unimportant things, recalled the ‘difficult question’ which Kaori mentioned before.

A man in his fifties came forward to ask if the store in front of Hatagaya station sold any birthday cakes.

Chiho had never heard of MgRonalds, as a hamburger franchise store, selling any cakes.

Even though no one taught her before, Chiho still did not think too much and prepared to answer that customer based on her own impression----

“We’re sorry, our store does not provide birthday party services, so we also do not sell cakes.”

Hearing Maou next to her suddenly reply like this, caused Chiho to get a shock.

Chiho, who was unable to link MgRonalds with birthday parties and birthday cakes, suddenly felt that it was hard to believe.

Maou, who was next to the surprised Chiho, continued to speak,

“However in district 23, in Meguro district and Suginami district, both of them have a branch store where birthday parties can be reserved. Because the store at Suginami is closer in comparison along the Keio line, let me go back the store number for you.”

After saying this, Maou quickly walked to the staff room, and took out a flyer which Chiho had never seen as a customer and passed it to the man.

Chiho, speechless, watched the customer give his thanks and leave.

“Sigh, actually this kind of things aren’t common.”

After saying this, he passed a similar flyer to Chiho to read.

“Some branches of McDonalds will provide reservation for birthday parties, but compared to stores in the city which are small, there are more branches like this in the suburbs.”

On the flyer, a photo of a few children who just got into elementary school holding a birthday party with the store employees was printed.

“Children seem to hold some admiration to the adults working around them, and would feel happy once they see this uniform and hat. But very few people will ask this question, so you don’t have to mind that much.”

“.....”

Chiho, looking at the flyer, started to feel ashamed at her own rashness.

Since the customer will ask this, he should be thinking of holding a birthday party at MgRonalds for his grandchild.

If Chiho was not careful and gave the wrong answer, it might just cause a party to go down the drain.

“.....so that’s why it was said earlier to ask someone when I am faced with something I don’t know.”

“Hm?”

“Because I have never seen MgRonalds sell cakes, so I thought there wasn’t any.....”

“Ah, yeah, actually I have not really seen it myself too.....”

“Sorry, I will be more careful in future.”

“I see.”

Maou nodded lightly.

“But since you are able to reflect like this, then on the contrary, you should be careful not to make yourself too depressed. If you really reflected from the bottom of your heart, then you definitely must not repeat the same failure.”

“.....Yes.”

“But even though I said this, it’s better if you don’t think that you’ll be able to do everything perfectly immediately.”

“Eh?”

“Because if Sasaki-san does everything perfectly during training, then I won’t have no standing right? Whether it’s me, Kisaki-san, or other people, everyone learnt their job by causing trouble to others, so making mistakes at the beginning, and reflecting later is also part of the job. It’s alright as long as there is development in the end.”

Even though it is said in a rather direct manner, but what Maou said while being considerate to Chiho still made the latter relax a little.

But even if Maou said this, it does not mean that Chiho could slacken.

“Yes, but in order not to feel bad when collecting salary, I would depend on others without acting like a spoiled child and work hard.”

After Chiho made herself more vigilant, Maou raised his eyebrow in a rather surprised manner and said,

“I seem to understand a little, why Kisaki-san can say that Sasaki-san will stay for a long time.”

“Eh?”

Chiho asked back in confusion.

Even though she was not clear, but if shop manager Kisaki praised her in this way, it was something to feel happy about.

The result of using her eyes, ears and body to experience little by little----

This is what working is.

Thinking and thinking about it, Chiho's consciousness started to become enveloped by sleep----

“.....I have to brush my teeth first.”

Chiho, who almost dropped her phone, did her best to urge her body to get up from the bed, and walked towards the wash basin.

※

Ever since Chiho started working, around two weeks have already passed. Even though she does not work every day, when she accumulated up to 7 work days, Chiho felt like she had already surpassed the difficulties from the beginning.

Even though it is very tiring, and it was not just filled with happy things, at least Chiho did not feel depressed when she thought about the next time she had to work.

“But your expression is really down.”

Contrary to her thoughts, Chiho's expression seems to be a bit gloomy, and so Kaori said this in concern.

“Yeah.....the shop manager and seniors are all good people, but I'm not troubled because of this.”

“What do you mean?”

“Hm.....I might become fat.”

“Ah?”

Other than the first day, the remaining six times she went to work, Chiho was given a rule to eat MgRonalds regular meals as dinner.

Even though Chiho liked MgRonalds meals, and she did not have to pay because she is a MgRonalds employee, but always eating fast food will make her care about the calories.

“Having somebody treat is a good thing, but eating it every time might be too painful. Why do you have to do such a thing?”

“Seems like if I don’t know what the taste of the products I sell is, I won’t be able to recommend to customers. Like me, even though I do go there often, there are a lot of meals I have never eaten before.....”

“Ah.....that’s true, I have also never eaten those which are too expensive and the breakfast.”

Kaori fully agreed after understanding.

“But of course, it won’t be like this forever, seems like after the training has ended, it would change to using employee price. Looks like you have to pay to it yourself afterwards.”

Even though she did not plan to do such a thing, in order to avoid boasting about her workplace, Chiho added this on.

The employee price Chiho was talking about refers to employees being able to buy the products sold at 30% discount.

“But it’s nice. Just like winning the lottery. The shop manager and seniors and kind and capable, and even treat you to food. Ah, if I work there, I would probably stay longer.”

Kaori said enviously from her heart----

“And then? Having tried working, have you gotten any inspiration related to future paths?”

Then like she suddenly remembered something, she opened up a troublesome topic.

“.....There’s not much development in that area.....”

Then again, the reason why Chiho started working, was because it was one of the ways to solve the future paths survey form.

Now that she thought about it, she had no free time to think about future paths when she was working.

Even if she led very fulfilling days, and with regards to the root motive for starting work, which is what to about her path in the future, Chiho had no leads at all.

With the nearing of the deadline to submit the survey form, the end of the month when the three way talk is held, there is not much time left.

“Hey, Sasaki.”

Next, Yoshiya also joined the conversation.

“So what is your hourly pay?”

“Hourly pay? Ugh, because I am still in training, and am a high school student, right now it is 800 yen, I wonder if there is a chance to increase by 50 yen when the training ends.”

According to shop manager Kisaki, the hourly pay after that is adjusted based on work performance, and Chiho’s direct senior Maou, set a legend of having his hourly pay increase by 100 yen just two months after getting hired----merely one month after the end of his training.

Even if no one specially explained to her, Chiho had seen Maou’s work performance with her own eyes, so she felt that she should still need to spend a long period of time to reach that standard.

“In other words, just working 6 hours in one day will earn almost 5000 yen, how amazing.”

“But, the prerequisite is to work, Yoshiya, don’t thinking about these unnecessary things, you should be more troubled about the future paths survey form compared to Sasa right. Aren’t your parents very strict since before?”

Even though Chiho only knew the both of them after going to high school, Kaori and Yoshiya seemed to have known each other since elementary

school, so they would occasionally talk about past topics which Chiho did not know about.

Kaori seemed to speak rather rudely to Yoshiya since before, but Chiho thought that since the relationship between the both of them has always been so good, it means that the both of them have already gotten used to this interaction, so she did not mind it that much.

But this seems a little different from normal.

“Strict huh.....that’s true. But I seem to have been largely ignored the whole time. So perhaps my parents may not even come on the day of the three way talk.”

“Eh?”

“Yoshiya, what are you saying?”

“Tokai, you should know about my older brothers right?”

“Ah.”

Kaori nodded like she suddenly realised it.

“Emura-kun, you have older brothers?”

This is a fact she first heard about in the second year after she had known them. Even though Chiho was interested just knowing about her friend’s brothers, but for unknown reasons, Yoshiya replied with a disgusted expression.

“Personally, I don’t really want Sasaki to know about this.”

“Eh? Why?”

“If you know about my brothers, I’m afraid Sasaki will look down on me.....uwah!”

At this instant, Kaori threw a pencil box filled with stationary and beautifully hit Yoshiya’s face.

From the feeling when it flew past her ear, Chiho felt that the force was not small at all.

“People look down on you because you’re this useless! Sasa is not that kind of person!”

“.....My teeth hit the zipper.....”

“Quickly go and wash it, and use alcohol to disinfect it!”

“Tokai! You!”

“W, wait a moment! Both of you calm down a little!”

After that, Chiho was forced to listen to the both of them argue for around five minutes over her head.

“There’s two older brothers above Yoshiya, those two are amazing.”

Even though the topic finally returned to the topic of Yoshiya's brothers, Kaori actually started to talk about what Yoshiya did not want to say.

“The oldest brother is a judge, while the second brother is a doctor right?”

“Eh?”

As it was a higher achievement than what she imagined, Chiho could not help but shout out.

However Yoshiya shook his head with a stony face and said,

“Don't leave out so much. Even though my oldest brother wants to be a judge, he is still currently in training, and second brother only managed to obtain his doctor license this year, and is not a proper doctor yet.”

“And because both his brothers are too amazing, so for the one who is last in line, Sasahata North failed-san, he has no face.”

“Don't say it so bluntly.....”

Yoshiya replied the bluntly speaking Kaori with a truly disgusted feeling.

“There was a period of time where my parents wanted me to watch my brothers and work hard, but recently, he did not say anything much, looks like they had given up, even when I failed in the exam earlier, they only hmphed once and let it go. And other than studying, I don't have any other skills worth expecting, so recently, I was considering whether to leave home.”

“Emura-kun.....”

“Since Tokai and Sasaki have started working, then I’ll find a job, save money and leave home.”

After Yoshiya said this simply, he ended this topic.

As Yoshiya did not seem to want to talk about his brothers anymore, Chiho did not continue asking, for unknown reasons, she felt that the Yoshiya now looked very dangerous.”

“.....I said that if you start work now, you might skip being held back one year and get expelled immediately.”

Perhaps she felt this atmosphere, Kaori said this rather seriously.

“It’s fine as long as I can earn money from working right? Recently, aren’t there people who frequently say that the assignments in school might even be useless for taking university entrance exams? With regards to the future path survey form, I might as well fill in “join the workforce.””

Yoshiya replied with his usual tone. But of course, Chiho did not know exactly how serious her friend was.

※

“Your expression today looks rather gloomy hm?”

“Ah, shop manager.....”

Kisaki spoke to Chiho standing in front of the cashier.

“Is there something you don’t understand?”

“Ah, n, no.....uh, perhaps it’s like that.....”

“?”

The topic of future paths talked about at school, was revolving around in Chiho’s brain and not going away.

Whether it was Yoshiya, Kaori or herself, they wanted to look further ahead, and understand what is the meaning of future path, but in the end, they did not know anything.

“.....Today, I discussed with my friends at school about future paths.....but in the end we did not understand anything, and the school also arranged a discussion. I felt that I should have some thoughts already, so.....”

“Oh, that thing.”

Kisaki nodded seriously.

“I’m sorry, I will focus properly and work.....”

“Adults’ opinion and irresponsible opinion, which one do you want to hear first?”

“Eh?”

Chiho got a shock.

Because Chiho originally thought that Kiseki will angrily tell her to work properly, but not only did Kiseki discuss this seriously with her, she even said something strange.

“.....Then, I'll start with the adults' opinion.”

“Hm, to adults, the future path of students 'is nothing much at all, and it's useless to be troubled over it'.”

“Eh?”

Kiseki's words were very ridiculous.

Just seeing this part, it was like those adults who Chiho have seen, the type of people who do what they want.

However, Kiseki's expression showed that there was still more to come.

“Do you know why? Because this topic future path, to an adult's life, it has already ended.”

“W, what does that mean.....”

Kiseki continued to speak to the confused Chiho.

“Because after becoming adults, they would know 'what should I have done that time to be more successful', so even if all of you were now facing the crossroads of deciding your future path, these adults who have already

experienced these things, would still be unable to understand why all of you are so troubled. Most adults would feel troubled about the time when they are passionate, immature and honest to themselves, so they have already forgotten these things very early on. So besides parents, teachers and tuition teachers, those opinions of the adults who have never truly seen you, they can all be ignored.”

“Tui, tuition teacher?”

“The job of those people is to let the students’ future paths be stable. So for each other’s good, from their hearts, they will think from the point of view of the students.”

“I, I see.....”

“In addition, even though it’s an irresponsible comment, but with regards to troubles about future paths, it can be roughly divided into, what should one do, what should one’s goal be, not knowing what to learn. These few points. Meaning that you don’t know what job to do in future, and even if you go to university, you don’t know what to learn.”

“That, that’s right, so.....”

“To express an opinion from an objective point of view, then a person can just study law or medicine at a national university with cheap school fees and become a judge or a doctor in the future. But in this era, even lawyers have a hard time haha, being a civil servant would be more stable.”

“B, but.....”

Chiho panicked because Kisaki unexpected brought up examples which existed around her, but the latter only gave a bold smile and continued speaking,

“But even if I said that, you would only think it is strange right?”

“Y, yes.....”

“If so, then you don’t have to be troubled about something so far into the future. No one can predict what will happen tomorrow, this is the same even with adults, and those petty people actually forced children like you to make such a boring choice, it’s really regretful.”

Kisaki said bluntly.

““Future path, is to continuously think about what you can do today for the sake of tomorrow.”. Since you don’t know what is going to happen next year, you should at least know what you want to do tomorrow right?”

“Tomorrow and today.....”

“This isn’t an analogy you know? But really referring to the today and tomorrow on the calendar. Future paths are about the future, and the future is the front of the things which are accumulated today and tomorrow. Most people are not smart enough to skip the time period in the middle and think about one, two years in the future. So they can only act within their power, and repeatedly work towards the tomorrow which is closest to today. With this, the period of one year will pass quickly.”

(T/N: Kiseki's words are wise. For those people lost about what to do about their future, it'll help to keep these words in mind.)

“Work, towards tomorrow.....”

“Sigh, anyway.....”

Kiseki suddenly placed her hand on Chiho's head and Chiho looked up with a troubled look on her face.

“Compared to being affected by those irresponsible adults, you should focus on the work in front of you. Just like I said just now, to strive towards tomorrow, today is important.”

“Ah.....alright.”

“The most important thing about handling money is being calm. You have to differentiate between 5000 yen and 10,000 yen properly okay.”

“I, I understand.”

When reminded by Kiseki, even if some vague portions were still left in her heart, Chiho still regained her senses because of this.

Chiho, who could not focus at work today, had mistakenly thought that the 5000 yen she received from the customers was 10,000 yen two times.

If not for the rules that she had to pass the notes to be given to the customers to other employees to check, Chiho would have given the wrong amount of change.

“I’m sorry, I will immediately focus on work.”

Compared to just now, this time, for unknown reasons, Chiho was finally able to answer this from her heart.

Even if the confusion in her heart had not been fully solved, she felt that her feelings were more relaxed compared to before.

“Very good. With this, talking about all these big concepts was worth it. I have to go to the company later and won’t be at the store, afterwards if there is something you don’t understand, please consult the other employees.”

“Alright.”

“Do your best, Chi-chan.”

“Yes!”

After Kisaki encouraged Chiho in a strange manner, she waved and returned to the staff room, until she closed the door completely, Chiho suddenly realised something.

“..... ‘**Chi-chan**’?”

Chiho, who prepared to get off work that night, got a shock when she saw Maou wearing his casual clothing in the staff room.

“Eh? Sasaki-san is leaving as well?”

“Thanks for the hard work, Maou-san as well?”

“Yeah, because I came in the morning, so I got off work earlier than usual.”

The store in front of Hatagaya station, not a 24 hour shop, only opened until midnight.

Normally when Chiho goes home, Maou would still stay until closing time, but today because he started work earlier, he got off work earlier.

But compared to that, Chiho was more concerned about something else.

“.....E, erhm, Maou-san?”

“Hm?”

“Y, you’re going home wearing that?”

“Yes?”

Maou’s unhesitant answer caused Chiho to become momentarily speechless.

Even though it is spring, but in the period, when the chill had not gone away, just a thin shirt with a hoodie is wearing too little.

“D, don’t you feel cold?”

“Yeah.”

Chiho was speechless again.

“Oh my, because my clothes aren’t drying at all.”

Even if Chiho felt that the problem should lie there, Maou still continued,

“The coin laundry machine store inflated in price, so I could only hand wash it, but since it is winter clothing, I didn’t expect that with by just taking out the dewatering process, it would take such a long time to dry.”

This is the first time Chiho chatted about personal topics with her senior..... even though she minded it a bit that the contents were too slice of life, but from the interactions these few days, Chiho also knew that Maou was the type of person who would speak frankly.

“In this type of weather, clothes won’t dry unless you dry them for about two days. So I can only wear this.”

It feels like this and wearing very little were two different issues.

But if she pried too much into the other party’s personal life, it would seem a bit rude.

“T, that’s true. The weather would start to turn warmer later, and male bodies are stronger too.”

Just as Chiho answered and prepared to change clothes----

“Eh? The weather will turn warmer later?”

The question from behind caused her to turn back and say,

“Eh.....because, it’s already April.....and spring is about to start right?”

“Ah, that’s true. That’s right, after winter is spring. It’s the same in this aspect.”

“Ma, Maou-san?”

Maou, who spoke like this natural thing to know is new knowledge, and when he noticed Chiho’s stare,

“.....I already knew this okay.”

“.....I thought so.”

Chiho, who felt like she could not rebuke this part, walked into the female changing room with her change of clothes.

“Th, then thanks for your hard work.”

“O, oh, thanks for your hard work.”

After finishing their greetings, Maou walked out of the staff room.

However when Chiho finished changing, finished greeting the remaining employees and prepared to leave the store, she discovered that Maou was still standing outside the store alone for unknown reasons.

“Maou-san? Is something wrong?”

“Ah.....”

“Ah! It’s raining.....”

Even without specially listening to Maou’s full answer, she could tell that it was raining outside.

And from how Maou was acting, he probably forgot to bring an umbrella.

“Oh my, such a mistake. And of all days, there’s no backup umbrella which can be borrowed today.....”

“Ugh, b, but the weather forecast this morning should have said that it would rain at night.....”

Chiho took a foldable umbrella out from her bag.

“Ah, I don’t have a television at home.”

But Maou yet again answered in an unexpected manner.

“Eh.....?”

“Sigh, looks like I can only run back directly. It’ll be good if the clothes can dry.....”

After saying this, Maou pulled on the thin hood for the hoodie, and took a deep breath like he was hardening his determination.

“Then Sasaki-san, be careful when you go home.....”

“E, erhm, may I know which area Maou-san’s home is in?”

When she regained her senses, Chiho had already asked this question to the Maou who was preparing to run out.

“Eh? Ah, hm, I live near Sasazuka station.....”

“I, I also planned to walk in that direction! If you don’t mind, do you want to share an umbrella?”

“Oh my, I feel bad, I’m saved.”

“Ah, erhm, y, yeah, you’re welcome.”

Compared to Maou’s refreshing voice of thanks, Chiho’s answer was as soft as a mosquito.

Even though Chiho said this on reflex, thinking about it carefully, she had never shared an umbrella with other guys.

The only lucky thing is that Chiho, who frequently went around with her archery gear, the foldable umbrella which she brought around was larger than normal umbrella, so there is no need to worry about too much physical contact with Maou.

“E, erhm, Maou-san, your shoulder.....”

But right now the one holding the umbrella is Maou, who is taller.

Perhaps he was being considerate, Maou intentionally leaned the umbrella more in Chiho's direction so she would not be hit by the rain, and as a result, Maou's other shoulder was drenched.

"It's alright. Compared to being thoroughly soaked, this is nothing."

However, no gloom could be heard in Maou's voice at all.

"Then again.....will it frequently rain from now on?"

"Eh? I, I'm not sure.....it'll probably keep raining, I guess?"

"I see.....how troubling. It looks like the clothes will take longer and longer to dry."

"But it'll start to get warmer from now on. Why don't you take this chance to buy a cheap washing machine?"

"Eh?"

This time, Maou's expression was clearly filled with surprise.

"It's impossible, buying two of such big things, there will be no place to put them, and no matter how you think about it, it should be very expensive right?"

"Eh, ah, that's true.....?"

Chiho, who thought that she interfered too much into the economic situation of other people, suddenly felt something was off.

Two, very big things?

“Even though it doesn’t look that big when placed in a laundry shop, but if we take the washing and dewatering machine as well as the drying machine back home directly, it would fill up the whole of the corridor.”

“E, erhm, Maou-san? I’m not talking about the huge industrial use washing machines, but the home use ones.....”

“Eh?”

“Eh?”

“.....Home use?”

“Y, yeah.....”

Did Maou think that all washing machines in the world were like the huge cubes in coin laundry shops.

“If it’s a home use model, they do sell fully automatic washing machines which are just slightly larger than the dustbins in the store you know? If you wish to lower the price even more, you can consider buying the double door type.....”

“.....Really?”

“Really.”

Actually the one who truly wanted to ask this question is Chiho, but Maou looked like he really received a huge shock.

“Since you live in an apartment, then there should be a tap in the corridor right? As long as you connect to there.....”

Chiho tried to find information related to where Maou lived from his strange words to elaborate further.

“There is one! So it’s for the washing machine?”

What else is it for then.

“Because I don’t know what it is used for, so I used it to fill the buckets with water to wash clothes!”

“.....To, wash clothes huh.”

“I see.....so washing machines can be bought.....I thought it was a monopolised business by a laundry guild.”

Maou nodded repeatedly.

What is going on. It felt like the conversation partner in front of her was a completely different person from the Maou in the store.

“Ne, can I ask another question?”

But Maou, whose eyes seemed to sparkle because he obtained new knowledge, looked strangely cute.

“Y, yeah, please go ahead.”

“After this, not only will there be more rain, the weather would also become warmer right. So even if it is placed in the shade, vegetables will still spoil very quickly, how does Sasaki-san normally.....”

Maou asked a more unexpected question, causing Chiho to stare in disbelief while listening.

“S, shade? This, it’ll be fine as long as you put it in the fridge.....”

Since it was said to that extent, even if it is Chiho, she can easily predict how Maou will answer two seconds later.

“Ah, I don’t have a fridge at home.”

“Buy one! Disregarding the washing machine, it’s really bad to not even have a fridge! If you eat rotten food, you would harm your body you know?”

“.....S, so you think so as well?”

“Even though the spring these few years have a long cold period, but it’ll be summer immediately after that! Like this, vegetables which spoil one step earlier will become inedible immediately you know?”

“Is, is that so? So vegetables have legs too?”

“This is just an analogy! Then again, why are you surprised, isn’t it the same situation last year and the year before? If you put raw things outside in the summer, it’ll spoil immediately!”

“I, I understand! I originally wanted to buy a fridge, so I’ll buy it later on.....then.....”

“Eh?”

“.....Erhm, where do I go to buy a cheap fridge and washing machine?”

“.....”

It looks like Maou really did not seem to know about common facts such as the change of seasons, and home electronic shops.

Even though he’s so capable in the store.....

Faced with this unexpected gap, Chiho really did not know if she should feel happy or troubled.....

“Maou-san, have you returned from overseas? Your English is so fluent..... have you been living overseas the whole time.”

Chiho tried to ask.

From what Maou said just now, even if he is good in fluent languages, the unfamiliarity he had with Japanese living is still rather exaggerated, but if he had been living overseas until recently, it can still be explained.

“Hm~ it’s a little different. I’m not considered a returnee. Even for English, it was learned because of ‘work’ needs.”

It was too bad that Maou's reply was a denial.

Even if she felt shocked at Maou saying without hesitation that he 'learned' English----

“.....For home electronics, I feel that for Yodogawa Bridge Home Appliances at Shinjuku Nishiguchi, not only is it cheaper, there are also more choices. There is still Don Quijote at Honancho area.....the place where there are a lot bicycles parked at the shop entrance.”

Chiho still pulled back to the original topic.

After all, continuous rebuking may cause the other party to feel unhappy, and she felt that even if she continued rebuking, it would only increase the number of things he did not know.

Maou did not mind Chiho who was acting that way, and nodded with widened eyes,

“Ah, I know these two stores. Because the storefront looks very big, I thought that they only sold luxury goods inside.”

“The things sold at Don Quijote are basically very cheap. Especially for bicycles, if you're not picky, you can buy one for a few thousand yen.”

“Eh? A few thousand yen can.....Sasaki-san is really knowledgeable.”

It looks like Maou truly felt admiration.

Even though Chiho felt that what she said was mostly common knowledge, Maou said before she could reply,

“No wonder Kisasi-san gave you a nickname so early.”

“Eh?”

“Didn’t she start calling you ‘Chi-chan’?”

Chiho’s heart beat vigorously once.

“Y, yes. You know about this?”

“Not only me, everyone knows. From tomorrow onwards, everyone would probably address you that way. When Kisasi-san starts using nicknames to address someone, it is the same as announcing that the person has already passed his training. Even though the company mandates that the salary for the trainee can only be adjusted after at least one month has passed, but since she started using nicknames to address you so early, then the hourly pay after the training ends, would probably be a little more than what was mentioned in the beginning.”

“Eh? Is, is that so?”

Chiho, who did not find any connection between nicknames and training, widened her eyes in surprise.

“Even though we don’t know the reason, but needing to respect a new person who Kisasi has used a nickname to address as an asset who can be independent is already an unwritten law in our store.”

Chiho suddenly remembered the experience which Kaori shared with her.

Could it be that the training period would only be in name and if she is unable to complete the work by herself later on, she would be scolded?

Perhaps he saw Chiho's uneasiness, Maou still added on,

“Ah, even so, we still will not ignore you just like this, you can relax. Before you can do everything independently, I will always be by your side.”

“T, thank you.”

As she felt relieved, Chiho also felt rather shy because of the sentence ‘I will always be by your side’.

“But what can be confirmed is that Kisaki-san probably acknowledged that you have a special characteristic, and thinks that you should be seen as a full time employee in terms of work. Perhaps this would give you some stress, but do not feel down because of this, please do your best.”

“Al, alright.....”

She kept feeling like she could not look at Maou's face directly and the both of them lapsed into a short silence like this.

Without them realising it, Maou and Chiho had already reached the intersection in front of Sasazuka station.

“I'm going in this direction from now on, how about Sasaki-san?”

“Ah, I’m going in the opposite direction, but, I can accompany you?”

If she separated from Maou here, he would still be drenched by the rain in the end.

“It’s alright. If I let you walk more to reach my house, it would be bad if something bad happens on the way back.”

“But.....”

Seeing that Chiho was unwilling to give up, Maou smiled, looked at the post box next to him and said,

“See, I got an umbrella as well. Thank you for accompanying me to this place, it was a big help.”

Maou was holding an old and worn down plastic umbrella.

The tip of that umbrella was obviously rusted, and even if unopened, it could be seen that the frame was already bent in many places.

Maybe someone had hung it on the post box and forgotten to take it away, or they planned to abandon it here.

The umbrella, which looked like it was put there for some time, was filled with water, but Maou still returned the foldable umbrella to Chiho, and opened that umbrella.

“Not bad, not bad.”

Maou nodded in satisfaction.

“I’m really grateful, be careful when you go back okay. Ah, also.....”

“Yes?”

“Hm, even though it feels a little strange saying this.....”

“Yes.....may I know what’s wrong?”

Maou coughed bashfully once and said,

“Continue working hard from tomorrow as well, ‘Chi-chan’.”

“.....Uh?”

“Then, see you next shift.”

“Ah, al, alright, thanks for the hard work.”

This was really an unexpected blow.

Chiho stared at Maou’s retreating back as he waved in a dazed manner and subconsciously put her hand on her cheek.

When was the last time she got called ‘Chi-chan’ by other guys?

Until she was called that by Kisaki, even Chiho herself forgot that she was called that when she was young.

And everyone who called her ‘Chi-chan’, were all adults who were mentally stronger and more mature than Chiho.

“.....Ugh!”

Chiho felt that until just now, her shoulder which had lightly touched Maou when they were under the same umbrella suddenly started to heat up, causing Chiho to suck in a breath.

When Chiho was young, she had held a mild admiration for an older male cousin, but right now, he is married and has children.

To Chiho, who had just become aware of the world around her, that older male cousin looked very mature, and like Maou right now, taught her many things she did not know.

For unknown reasons, the figure of that older male cousin had overlapped with Maou.

Dependable, knew many things she did not know, and even if he’s very mature, he was a little dense in some aspects.....

“Eh? E, eh?”

Chiho, who felt that even her face had started to heat up, was unable to tear her gaze away from the direction which Maou had left in for a long time.

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“.....There’s no resemblance at all.”

After going home and trying to look at the photo album again, Chiho discovered that Maou and that already married cousin did not resemble each other at all.

Even though she felt bad saying this about her cousin, Maou was more good looking compared to him.....

“W, what am I thinking! O, ow!”

Chiho, who closed the thick photo album with force accidentally clamped down on her own finger, which pained her so much that she could not speak for a while.

After returning the photobook to her mother, who felt confused because Chiho suddenly asked to see the photo, she glared at her fingernail which had slightly changed colour and returned to her room.

Chiho lazily jumped on her bed, buried her face into the pillow and sighed then silently swung her legs.

“.....What is wrong with me.”

Chiho increased the speed of her leg swinging.

“What is wrong with me what is wrong with me what is wrong with me!”

The bed springs started to produce ‘creak creak creak’ sounds----

“Ow!”

After that Chiho jumped up from the pain because her swinging legs hit the wall, and after pressing her toes for a while with teary eyes, she said,

“W, what am I doing.....hm?”

Just as Chiho felt confused at her meaningless actions, she heard the sound of her ringing mobile phone.

“A message, I wonder what it is about.”

Chiho protected the front of her toes which got hit and picked up her mobile phone which was placed on her room table.

“Eh, it’s Emura-kun?”

The contents of the message was very simple.

“I’ll be going to Mags with Tokai tomorrow to eat.”

“Eh, wait.....”

Chiho replied on reflex.

“I’m still not used to the work, don’t come first.....”

Even though Kisaki and Maou seemed to have high ratings of her, honestly Chiho did not know what they saw in her.

Chiho already knew beforehand that her friends or family might come to the place she works as a customer, but since actually choosing it to be tomorrow of all days, this timing was really too bad.

This time she would definitely fail because she was thinking of unnecessary things.

“Eh? Kao-chan?”

Just as Chiho thought this, this time it was Kaori’s turn to send a message over.

“Yoshiya sent a message, saying that he wants to go to where Sasa is working. As long as you don’t reply, he wouldn’t know that you have a shift tomorrow, what are you doing’ah!”

Chiho started to curse her own carelessness.

Tomorrow would be the first time Chiho would work on a Sunday since she started work. Until today, she had never stayed in the store for more than 6 hours.

Now, even if she told Yoshiya and the others not to come, they would definitely not listen.

“W, what should I do.....what should I do if friends come over.....”

Even if the both are them are her friends, but since she is still working, and there are other customers around, then it feels like she should treat them as customers.

But in television dramas, if a customer which the employees know come over, the employee would normally act more familiar.....

“B, but those stores are bars run by the person himself, for a franchise like MgRonalds, it can’t work that way right?”

If the people who came were her parents, things might be simpler.

Even though she would also feel troubled, but her mother coming to greet shop manager Kisaki, who has been taking care of her daughter, is a very natural development.

But what would it be like with friends from school?”

People who are close to her coming to her workplace as customers.

No matter what, Chiho could not imagine such a scene occurring in a franchise shop like MgRonalds.

“R, right! As long as I ask Maou-san.....”

At this instant when Maou’s face flashed across Chiho’s mind, she picked up her mobile phone on reflex.

“Ah.....I don’t know his contact details.”

Even though Maou had almost always kindly guided Chiho during her training period, the both of them had never exchanged numbers or mail addresses, so Chiho naturally did not have ways to contact Maou, basically----

“W, why have I thought of asking Maou-san.....even though there are other people around.....”

Why had she not considered the possibility of asking other people before she discovered that there was no way of contact Maou.

“Calling the store directly.....is not very good huh.”

Even though Chiho did record down the store’s telephone number in her mobile phone----

“My friends are coming tomorrow, what should I do?”

It felt that this question was really too immature.

“It, it’s not confirmed that they’re coming tomorrow anyway, I’ll just wait till tomorrow and secretly ask the people on shift what.....to do.....”

Chiho nonchalantly looked at the shift timetable clamped within her notebook, and remembered that there was another piece of paper behind the shift timetable.

“Te, telephone number.....”

That was the contact records of the employees.

When they are suddenly unable to go to work because of certain reasons, besides obviously reporting to shop manager Kisaki, they still need to personally ask other people to replace them.

In addition, even though it is an emergency contact list for accidents and disasters in name, but the contact list which she received on the first day of work still did not have Chiho's number recorded.

Chiho subconsciously looked for Maou's record and discovered that a mobile number is recorded on it.

Then again, what kind of life does Maou normally lead.

Since he did not have a television, washing machine and fridge, he must be leading a hard life.

But from the shift timetable, Maou seemed to have a dense shift arrangement every day, morning and night, so it could be seen that he should not be a student.

Since he's not a student, and lived such a frugal life, he could be a musician or an actor, the kind of person who chases his dreams.

“W, wrong, I don't want to know about these things at all! What I want to know is when friends come to the store, would I be able to speak to them, and if it would affect the atmosphere in the store.....”

From the way he works and his normal behaviour, perhaps Maou, whose behaviour is like his personality, and is down to Earth, is actually saving for university or vocational school fees.....

“I already said it's not like that!”

Even though he is living a frugal life in an apartment by himself, Maou's normal life still looks very organised.

Honestly speaking, whether it's about his hair, bag or even casual clothing, Maou's tastes are not at all fashionable. But he always grooms himself well and the uniform is well-washed. Perhaps there is someone nearby who is taking care of him.

“...Uu.”

When she thought to this part, Chiho suddenly felt unhappy for unknown reasons.

But, she did not know why her mood had become worse.

But, thinking about it normally, this is not impossible.

But, whether Maou-san had a lover, had nothing to do with her at all.....

“Wrong wrong wrong wrong! It's definitely not like that!”

“Chiho! What are you being so noisy for!”

Her mother's voice from downstairs caused Chiho to come to her senses, her face blushing.

That's right, she should try asking her mother in a roundabout way. After all, the difficulty of calling suddenly is too high, and Chiho did not want the other party to think that she was a sloppy person by calling and asking unimportant things.

“I don’t want him.....to think of me this way.”

After putting the shift timetable back into the notebook, Chiho turned off the light in her room and went downstairs to discuss her troubles with her mother.

But after her room darkened, that imaginary partner at Maou’s side kept occupying a corner of her mind.

It should be a person who is working hard to support him from behind so Maou can focus fully on work.

Or unexpectedly, was Maou actually plagued by a certain person who likes to spend money and is lazy?

Or was it a person different from the usual impression which Maou gave others, a female who wore traditional kimono every day?

Or is it a person actually suited for the hardworking Maou, an female salary worker with a proper occupation.....

“T, this has nothing to do with me! It doesn’t matter, doesn’t matter!”

Chiho shook her head hard, trying to shake these strangely detailed imaginations from her mind.

“What doesn’t matter?”

Unexpectedly, the words she spoke when she thought to herself was heard clearly by her mother downstairs.

“It, it’s nothing. Then again, there’s something I want to ask you about.....”

Chiho changed the topic and moved towards the living room to consult her mother on the question she truly wanted to ask.

“It doesn’t really matter, but weren’t you troubled over the future path counselling before? What happened with that issue afterwards?”

Chiho’s mother asked Chiho, who was planning to sit on the living room sofa.

“.....Ah!”

The latter let out an airheaded sound.

Chiho completely forgot, next Monday was the deadline for handing in the survey.

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After troubling over it for one night, in the end, Chiho only filled in her name and class in the future paths survey.

But Chiho, who went to work with these troubles, her most urgent question right now was whether Yoshiya would come to the shop at all.

After that message last night----

“I will watch him properly and not let him do stupid things.”

Kaori sent another message, but even ignoring this, friends from school coming to see her working self will still make her feel embarrassed.

It was only until her friends said that they want to come over did Chiho finally realise why Kaori only told her about the part time work after she resigned.

This was not due to any principle. Purely because one has to receive their friends in a different standpoint, it made one feel anxious and uneasy.

Even though Chiho tried to discuss with her mother last night on how to handle friends when they came to the workplace----

“As long as it doesn’t disrupt your work, you should be able to chat with them a bit right?”

She only got this irrelevant answer.

“And you have to be careful not to be glared at by the shop manager and seniors.”

And this advanced warning.

Even though she did not know the reason, since Kisaki just acknowledged a certain aspect of Chiho, she definitely did not want her ratings to drop because of her carelessness.

As for the result----

“E, erhm, my friends might come to the store today.....”

it was keeping to the guide where she cannot make her own decision when she is unsure of something, and discussing with Maou.

“Friend? Is it from school?”

“Y, yes. Then, when my friends come.....”

As she spoke, Chiho also felt that this question was really very stupid.

At the same time Chiho asked the question, she was thinking at the same time that according to the situation up until now, as long as she read the atmosphere and acted accordingly, she would not have any problems.

As if to affirm Chiho’s inner thoughts, Maou smiled warmly, nodded and said,

“Actually you don’t have to be so reserved. As long as it is not a situation where it is very busy or causing too huge of a ruckus, even if you go the corner and chat a little, it wouldn’t be an issue. That’s what you wanted to ask right?”

“Ah, y, yes.”

Today, for reasons unknown, Chiho could not look at Maou’s face directly at all, and she stammered when she answered.

“Having familiar people see your working shelf would always make you feel restless. Even so, if you treat the other party politely like normal customers, it feels a bit irritating.”

Maou gave a wry smile like he remembered something.

Seeing this, Chiho also felt relieved.

So everyone thought about the same things after all.

“Then again, I have never thought that I would use polite language to serve my own official. So after that, it was awkward between us for quite some time.”

Since even Maou, who she thought would not feel shaken no matter what happens, would also think so, perhaps what she felt is something which cannot be helped.

Thinking to this, Chiho suddenly had a strange feeling.

If the words Maou said, was a term she had never heard before mixed inside?

Official? What does that mean, is it someone’s name?

(T/N: Maou probably pronounced 臣子 as Omiko or Yatsuko, which sounds like a name.)

Maou, who did not detect Chiho’s small confusion nodded, looked at Chiho and said,

“Regarding this part, you can just read the atmosphere and react accordingly.”

“Ah, uh, I understand. Thank you. And, I’m sorry, actually asking this unimportant question.”

But because Chiho only thought it was a little strange, and also because of Maou looked at her directly, Chiho suddenly felt very awkward, so as she lowered her heads and gave her thanks, the strange feeling she felt earlier easily disappeared until there were no traces left.

“It’s alright, it’s alright. At the beginning, whether the PET bottles left behind by customers could be thrown away, I had to ask others as well. Rather than that, the Chi-chan who is troubled over how to treat her friends is very reliable when it comes to switching one’s state of mind.”

“K, kya!”

“Eh?”

Ah, y, yes! Thank you for the compliment!”

“O, oh? It feels like Chi-chan is very energetic today.”

Chiho started stammering again, and got a shock because Maou called her ‘Chi-chan’, in order to hide her embarrassment, even her volume had gotten louder.

Even though he was a bit hesitant when he called her yesterday, today Maou was able to call her ‘Chi-chan’ successively.

Even though she was not particularly shocked when being called that by the other seniors, it was only with Maou did things not go that smoothly.

“Roughly when will they come?”

Eh? W, what do you mean?”

“Your friends.”

“Ah.....ah, that, I don’t know yet. Basically, whether they will really come or not is.....”

“I see. Then it’s really difficult to calm down. When the person I know wanted to come the first time, I also got nervous without any reason. But it is easy to make mistakes by being anxious, you have to pay more attention okay.”

Even though the reason of Chiho’s ‘anxiety’ was not just about her school friends, but once she thought about the other reason----

“E, erhm. I’ll go check ‘number 10’ at 3 o’ clock!”

“O, oh, I’ll leave it to you.”

Chiho, who was very embarrassed, forcefully changed the topic, moved her gaze away from Maou and walked towards the washroom.

“.....Looks like she’s not very good at handling those friends.”

Maou watched Chiho's back and said this in confusion.

'Number 10' refers to the washroom, it was one of the secret codes within the store so that the customers who are eating are not aware of the washroom.

MgRonalds has the check the cleanliness of the washroom every hour.

Chiho, who went to the washroom, after conducting the checks based on earlier instructions, wrote her 'name' on the inspection name list next to the washbasin.

".....Wah!"

Above the 3 o' clock space which Chiho sighed on----inside the space of the 2 o' clock check, in a guy's squarish handwriting was the big word 'Maou'.

"Maou, Chiho.....aah? I, I wrote it wrong! N, no, it's not considered wrong!"

Chiho only wrote her name in the centre of the space.

She quickly cancelled out the words written on top and re-wrote the word 'Sasaki' in the remaining narrow space left.

".....Uu, it feels more embarrassing that way."

Why is she so bothered about Maou.

Even though she did not know the reason at all, once she thought about Maou, she could not keep calm.

If this goes on, Chiho got more and more worried about what she should do when Kaori and Yoshiya came.

Even though she was not particularly tired, Chiho, who walked out of the washroom listlessly----

“Ah, it’s Sasaki.”

“Uwahh!”

She immediately met up with Yoshiya in casual clothes, causing her to shout and jump up.

“Oh, Sasa.”

Kaori appeared behind Yoshiya, and both of them were still empty handed.

“Because you weren’t at the counter, so we were thinking what we should do if you were working in a place we can’t see.”

“I, I see, ah! Uh, t, that.....”

Chiho, who was not mentally prepared at all, used her eyes to ask Maou at the counter for help without caring for her reputation.

Maou, who seemed to notice because of the shout just now, after glancing at Chiho and the others, nodded and moved his chin a bit.

Honestly, Chiho did not know what that code meant at all.

She was not so synchronised with Maou such that they could communicate with eye contact alone.

Therefore, Chiho, who thought that Maou who be able to handle a situation like this, straightened up her posture as much as possible, bowed and said,

“Welcome! If you have decided what to order, please move to the counter!”

“.....Ooh?”

“Oh, not bad.”

Chiho, who could not help but look up at the counter, discovered that Maou did not nod or shake his head, and was only smiling.

Was it alright to just handle it like this?”

Either way, Chiho first brought the two of them to the counter manned by Maou and her.

Then----

“Welcome, thank you for the help before.”

“.....Ah! You’re the employee from that time?”

Maou greeted Kaori.

“You still remember me?”

“When I heard that Sasaki-san’s friends are coming, I had a rough idea that it would be you. Causing trouble for you earlier, I’m very sorry about that.”

“Eh? What? Did something happen earlier?”

Yoshiya, who did not know that Chiho’s future path survey had been drenched by cola, got a shock after seeing the interaction between his friends and the MgRonalds employee.

“That’s right, Sasaki-san.”

“Y, yes?”

“Since it’s a rare chance that your friends have come as a customer, why don’t you try taking the order and assemble the order yourself?”

“Eh, myself?”

Chiho answered in surprise.

Assembling the order means, after taking the order, put the ordered food onto the tray to give to the customers, right now Chiho was only allowed to help customers take orders and cashiering.

Depending on the number of people in the shift, other than peak periods, in principle, the employees at the counter are in charge of handling the drinks and the food which came with the order.

This was different from just taking orders and cashiering, one person would have to prepare the drinks, fries----or salad and dessert depending on the situation within a limited time and pass it to the customer.

Even though Chiho had already learned the process of assembling the order once, would she be able to complete it smoothly.

In the short window when Chiho was troubled, Maou walked out of the counter for unknown reasons and discussed with Kaori.

Then Kaori took out a certain item from her bag.

“This is the receipt from before, that employee said I can use this to exchange for the same items.”

“Eh?”

That was the free receipt which Chiho heard Kisaki mention when she was still a customer.

That means, on the day when the cola was spilled, Kaori was also one of the people who was ‘involved in the trouble between customers’, so even if the store mentioned some kind of compensation, it was not anything strange.

“Ah, then again I have a voucher.”

“Al, alright!”

Yoshiya probably had not decided what to order, she only saw him take out his mobile phone with the feature to read electronic wallets and showed the image of the voucher.

“Do your best.”

After saying this, he backed up until he was one step behind Chiho and watched over her.

After Chiho closed her eyes for a short while to focus, she took a deep breath.

Since she was being tested, then she would need to respond in some way.

“.....For this customer, you only require the items as written on the receipt?”

“Yeah, that would be alright.”

“I understand. Then there is no need to pay for these items.”

Chiho keyed in the dessert and cola set meal recorded on Kaori’s receipt and pressed the special options button. While operating, Chiho keyed in the number on Kaori’s receipt, confirming that this receipt is already part of the free service. And after setting the price to it being free, she finished the order.

“For this voucher, can you change the fries to nuggets?”

Yoshiya used the voucher to order a set meal.

Chiho pressed the mobile phone reader button----

“Please place your mobile phone in front of the machine.”

The sensor in front of the mobile phone let out a blue glow.

“.....For this customer, as your voucher can only be used for promotional items, other than the amount, other changes cannot be made, please understand.”

“Then it’s fine like this. My drink is cola.”

“I understand.”

After confirming all the orders----

“The total is 650 yen.”

“Ah, I only have big notes, is that alright?”

After Chiho received the tea coloured note, she confirmed the amount displayed on it.

“I received 10,000 yen. Received 10,000 yen from the customer!”

After asking the other employees to help check the amount of the high value note, Chiho placed the paper note into the cashier, and after taking out the change to give to the customer, she confirmed it once again.

“Excuse me, we only have small notes left, would that be fine?”

As the peak lunch hour had just passed, there was not a lot of 5000 yen notes left, and only 1000 yen notes can be given to the customer.

Chiho counted the notes carefully in front of Yoshiya and passed it to him.

“Here is 9000, and 350 yen. Can I put everything into the same tray?”

“It’s alright.”

“I understand. Then please wait on the right hand side for a while.”

After completing the transaction, the screen in the counter area displayed the waiting time on it.

Employees have to place all the orders in front of the customers before the screen turned red.

It was April season right now. And the warmer was slightly turned on within the store, therefore the dessert which melts easily have to be delivered last.

Chiho confirmed that there was no one else behind Kaori and Yoshiya, so she looked towards the kitchen.

At this time, the mayonnaise patty of the mayonnaise burger which Yoshiya ordered had already been put inside the oil pot.

It would have to be fried for 20 seconds, then placed between two burger buns together with poached egg, lettuce and specialised sauce.

So Chiho decided to handle the fries which were not as easily affected by room temperature.

“I”

However, after seeing the situation, Chiho immediately changed her direction. She first prepared two cups of cola, and took the dessert out from the freezer and wiped off the ice on it.

At this moment, the completed hamburgers slid down the delivery belt.

Chiho pressed the ‘Wait for meal at seat’ button at the corner of the waiting screen, and after putting the hamburgers, drinks, dessert and a plastic stand with a number on it onto the tray, she put the tray in front of the two customers.

“I’m very sorry. The fries are still being prepared, please take this number plate and wait at your seat for a while, I will deliver the freshly made fries to you later, okay?”

“Oh, that’s great, looks like we came at the right time.”

On the contrary, Yoshiya seemed happy that the fries were not done yet.

“I’m sorry, then enjoy your meal, both of you.”

“Yeah.”

“Thanks, Sasa.”

Unexpectedly, the both of them walked directly to the direction of the seats.

Even though she looked back a few times in the middle, at least it looks like she did not give the both of them a bad impression.

Seeing the both of them choose a seat further away and next to the window, it was then Maou returned to Chiho's side.

“Chi-chan.”

“H, how was it?”

What Chiho was concerned about the most was of course, Maou's rating.

In reality, this work was practically all taught by Maou. If she made any mistake, it would be like letting Maou down.

But as if to dispel Chiho's unnecessary worries, Maou smiled, nodded and said,

“That's great, I never expected that you would learn it after teaching you only once. There's nothing wrong at all.”

“.....Thank god!”

An indescribable happiness filled Chiho's heart, causing her to clench her fist subconsciously.



“I had thought that you would get stuck at the button for the free receipt and the fries, but you actually calmly and smoothly finished the job, it looks like that even if I’m not at your side, you wouldn’t have any problems anymore right?”

“E, eh? I, I don’t want that!”

However, after hearing the second half of Maou’s sentence, Chiho replied in reflex.

“Eh?”

“Ah, eh? Ugh, that, I will be troubled like that. I’m still not that.....”

“Oh my, I won’t abandon you like that. But since you learn so fast, perhaps Kisaki-san will ask me to teach you more in depth things.....oh, the fries are ready.”

“Ah!”

At this moment, the beep notifying that the fries are ready sounded, and golden fries started to float up on the oil pot.

“Then later I will teach you how to add salt to the fries. Because there are customers waiting this time, I will handle it.....here.”

Maou passed the fries which Yoshiya had ordered but was still waiting for to Chiho.

“.....Uh!”

Even though Chiho sucked in a breath because she touched Maou's fingers slightly, but Maou did not seem to be particularly concerned, and passed the tray and serviette to Chiho.

"There aren't many customers right now, you can chat with them a little."

"Eh, can, can I?"

"It's fine as long as you don't talk for too long. Go."

"Alright, thank you."

Chiho bowed once, and walked towards the seat where Kaori and Yoshiya were waiting.

"Thank you for waiting, this is your medium fries!"

"Oh."

After putting the fries on the table and collecting the number plate, Chiho switched from her professional smile to her normal expression and started a conversation with the both of them.

She kept feeling that this situation was very awkward.

".....Sigh, it's roughly like this."

"Eh? Is it fine like this?"

Kaori seemed to be concerned about Maou over at the counter.

“Yeah, Maou-san said I can talk with both of you a bit.”

“Oh, he’s rather understanding.”

After Kaori nodded in admiration and suddenly appraised Chiho from head to toe.

“It suits you.”

“Eh? Is, is that so?”

“Yeah, you look very mature.”

Yoshiya also nodded like he agreed with Kaori’s opinion.

“It, it’s not like that!”

Chiho, who could not help but become shy, started to wave the number plate picked up from the table.

“Hey, Yoshiya, stop looking at just the legs!”

“Idiot Tokai, that’s not it! Even though the appearance is like that, but the service just now, was really done well.”

“Hm, that’s right. I think it’s at least a lot better than the colleagues at the place I used to work at.”

“Is, is that so? Thank you.”

Even though it is embarrassing to be seen by friends, but to be praised so generously would also make one feel shy.

“After seeing this scene, I do want to start working at well. From what I heard from Tokai, this seems to be a good place.”

Even though it was not known how serious he was, but after Kaori heard Yoshiya say it, she immediately gave a stony face and said,

“There you go again.”

“What. I’m very serious here.”

“Even if you get serious, it’s not even half of Sasa. At least for me, I don’t have the confidence to be able to work here for the long term.”

“Eh?”

Kaori’s unexpected answer, caused Chiho and Yoshiya to feel confused. After all, when Kaori heard Chiho’s description earlier, she said that she might be able to stay longer if she was here.

“Sasaki-san! Can you come over for a moment?”

Then Maou’s shout could be heard in the direction of the counter. Perhaps Chiho had stayed here for too long.

“I’m sorry, I need to go over.”

“Y, yeah.”

“Do your best.”

Chiho turned and left the two people, rushing towards the counter.

“Sasaki-san, this customer wishes to say hello to you.”

“Eh?”

A customer is looking for me?

Just as Chiho looked up at the customer’s face in confusion----

“Ah!”

Chiho could not help but suck in a breath.

The person standing there was that white man with a large build.

That man had once accidentally spilled Chiho’s cola when she was still a customer, and just based on the results, this incident was also one of the reasons why Chiho started working at the store.

“Ah, hello! Before.....”

Even though Chiho spoke Japanese directly----

“This gentleman says ‘I didn’t expect that you actually became an employee here in the end. The document from that day is still alright?’”

But with Maou’s synchronised translation, the both of them were barely able to communicate.

“Actually I have not handed it in yet, but through working outside of school, I feel that I am able to catch a glimpse of what I want to do after graduating.”

“‘In my student days, I had felt lost about life because I didn’t know what I should learn. But I’m different from you, I didn’t try to solve the problem during my student days, so I had a hard time later, it was only until now am I able to feel proud about my job after much difficulty’.”

“May I know what you’re working as right now?”

“Ugh, ‘I am an art dealer who specialised in importing Japanese pens and brushes into Helsinki. There is no products in the world with better quality than Japan’s pens and brushes’. Oh!”

Even Maou, in charge of the translating felt very surprised.

“Helsinki, that’s in Finland right?”

When the white man was asked by Chiho, he nodded happily.

“This gentleman said he’s returning to Helsinki tomorrow, when he is concerned about Chi-chan’s situation later, so he tried to take a look in the store.”

“But thanks to you, I am able to work in such a great store. Even though I don’t know about the future, but if you have a chance to come to Japan again in the future, please come here again. I will work hard so that I can give you good news at that time.”

“He said ‘**Then it’s an agreement, please do your best. What you learned in your student days, will definitely be useful in some form in the future’.**”

“Yes!”

Chiho nodded once with force and said,

“Ah, Maou-san.”

“Hm?”

“.....Can you help me tell him, when he comes next time, I will try hard so that I can speak to him directly?”

※

“.....”

“Ne? If there is that kind of senior around, you probably won’t be able to continue on right? Normally, you would break down because you feel that you’re too useless right. If you want to quit school no matter what, I won’t stop you, but at least with your abilities, you won’t have the qualifications to work here.”

“.....”

“Yoshiya?”

“Hey, Tokai.”

“Hm?”

“.....Where is Finland?”

“.....You, forgetting about Helsinki, you should at least know where Finland is right. Scandinavian Peninsula! North Europe! Not even knowing that, and actually wanting to do work at Sasa’s level, seriously laughable.”

“Is there really someone who would come to Japan from so far away to buy pens?”

“If the senior did not translate wrongly, then there is right? Even though I think it is correct.”

“For what?”

“How would I know! If you’re so concerned, why don’t you ask the person himself?”

“How do I ask?”

“Looks like you have to ask that Maou-san, or use that broken English which you failed in school or something?”

“.....”

※

Six in the evening. The two friends stayed until it was time for Chiho to get off work.

Luckily, during that period of time, it was not crowded within the store to the extent where the two of them had to be asked to leave.

Thanks to Maou, Kaori and Yoshiya, Chiho finally obtained the confidence to be able to finish an order by herself, but following that, there should still be many things which she needed to depend on herself to learn.

Just as Chiho confirmed that she had gone through a fulfilling day and grasped the results----

“Hey, Sasaki.”

“Hm? What is it?”

On the way home, Yoshiya asked with a puzzling expression,

“That senior of yours who can speak English, is he a university student or someone who returned from overseas?”

“It seems like he is not. I asked him before as well, and he said that he learned it because he felt that English is necessary for work. In reality, there are foreigners who do come to the store frequently from nearby companies.”

“Normally, would a person go to that extent for work?”

Chiho also had some doubts about this.

Of course, it was one of the factors, but----

“Emura-kun, do you know what language is used in Finland?”

“Eh? It’s not Engilsh?”

Chiho shook her head.

“It’s Finnish. Even though it’s a different language from English, that gentleman learned English and German on his own through self-learning after graduating from school. And it was said that he only referred to the teaching materials from school.”

“.....Was it because he is already more intelligent than most people?”

“He did not go to university you know.”

Yoshiya was speechless.

Seeing Yoshiya’s side view, Chiho remembered what Kisaki said before----

“Future path, is to continuously think about what you can do today for the sake of tomorrow.”

Maou and that white man, both felt it was necessary for tomorrow, so they learned English today.

Even though a person does not know what they would be doing one year later, but regardless of tomorrow or one year later, there will not be another day like today, so at that time, it would be better to obtain more.

Since he is an art dealer who goes around the world, then even if it is not tomorrow, he might come to Japan next month. Before that, Chiho hoped that she would be able to at least learn how to use English in greetings.

Even though she had these thoughts now, it was not necessary that it would become an asset in one, two years, but----

“If you’re unable to work hard for yourself, how would you be able to do something for others.”

It was not only Maou, Kisaki and the other seniors, the people at that store are like this.

Because you want to work for others, you would be able to work hard for yourself.

Because you are working for yourself, you would be able to work hard for others.

“.....What does that mean?”

Yoshiya asked in confusion, but Chiho turned back and said,

“I’m not telling you!”

Chiho was not so considerate that she would tell other people the answer that she obtained after troubling over it, so she replied Yoshiya in an unclear manner and bullied him a little.

“I think if it’s now, I would probably be able to fill in the survey form.”

“Eh? Sasa hasn’t completed it yet?”

Kaori, who walked in front, turned back with surprise on her face and said,

“I wrote that I wanted to go to a university with a strong archery club. It isn’t a total lie, after all what can make me work hard right now is only this. If people still complain because of this, I’ll think of a way at that time.”

“.....Why are the two of you like this.”

After that, until the three of them separated, Yoshiya kept showing the expression that he could not accept it.

※

The nerve wrecking day three way talks.

Chiho’s group were participating in the talks in the order Emura, Sasaki and Tokairin, and were sitting on the chairs in the corridor with their accompanying guardians before the start of the talks.

Of course, Yoshiya’s mother, whom he kept insisting would not come, also came.

From Yoshiya himself and what she heard about his older brothers, Chiho originally thought she would be a mother with a cold personality who is enthusiastic about education, but instead she was a well-endowed lady who looks like she has a warm personality.

Ever since he went to Chiho's work place, Yoshiya started to become very quiet.

Because she could not find any opportunity to bicker with Yoshiya, Kaori was also obviously restless.

"Emura-kun, please come in."

Andou-sensei called the last name of mother and son, asking them to enter the classroom.

Even though Yoshiya's mother bowed to Chiho and the others, Yoshiya walked directly into the classroom without even looking back.

"Sasa, Sasa."

Once the door closed, Kaori waved Chiho over with a soft voice and knelt next to the gap under the classroom door.

"K, Kao-chan, you can't do that."

"Hey, Kaori?"

Chiho and Kaori's mother chided Kaori, who obviously wanted to eavesdrop.

".....Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to come."

Unexpectedly, even without intentionally eavesdropping, Andou-sensei's voice could be heard from within, causing everyone present to lose interest.

The premises of Sasahata High School were very old, no matter how tightly the door is closed, it does not have any soundproofing effect at all.

“.....Chiho, Mama is going to go to the washroom.”

After saying this, Chiho's mother stood up with a wry smile.

“.....I will take the chance to go as well.”

Kaori's mother also took the chance to get up. Even if it's not intentional, to adults, they would still feel bad listening to the other people's talks.

The two mothers disappeared around the corner of the corridor, Chiho and Kaori looked at one another.

“.....Me, me too.....”

Even though Chiho also wanted to follow her mother's footsteps and leave----

“No, we have to wait here.”

But Kaori stopped her with a soft voice and forcefully pulled Chiho back to the chair.

“And hasn't that Yoshiya been a little strange recently? Perhaps he had some mental change.”

“Seriously.....even if it's like this, we might not be able to hear.....”

“Emura, even though Sensei does not really want to say this, but with your current results, wanting to go to English course in university is really a bit too difficult, why do you suddenly have such thoughts?”

““ ””

Just like a joke, Andou-sensei’s voice was heard at a very opportune time, causing Chiho to come close to laughing.

And on this point, Kaori was the same as well.

Yoshiya actually wanted to take the English course?

“Perhaps you might have known beforehand, but I have two outstanding older brothers.”

Before the surprise felt by the two of them could dissipate, Yoshiya in the classroom said with a slightly suppressed volume.

“But because I know my results are not good, so I do not think I would be able to catch up with my brothers. My brothers have made being a judge and doctor their goal because they have clear reasons, but I do not have any ambitions, and even if I took model careers which the world thinks would make a person succeed as a goal right now, it probably would not go well.....”

“Sensei also feels that there is nothing that wrong with taking stellar examples as a goal, and then?”

“.....Finland.”

What Yoshiya said after keeping silent for a while, caused Chiho and Kaori to get another shock.

“Hm?”

“Sensei, people who come from Finland to Japan to buy pens, what kind of life do you think they live?”

“Eh?”

“Do you think they can make a living like this?”

“W, wait a minute, I do not really understand.”

It was not strange for Andou-sensei to feel confused.

“This is what I think. Even though other people say that the salary of doctors or civil servants are better, and their lives would be more stable, but those people did not get money because they have become civil servants, but because they performed work as civil servants right? Sensei also gets your salary because you teach us right? Not because it’s stable, Sensei must have had romantic thoughts and dreams about this occupation in your own way, which is why to choose this job right?”

“That, that is correct. Yeah.”

“I only started getting these thoughts after seeing the situation of my friend working. I should not see the name of an occupation as a goal, but when I find an occupation which can be a goal, I should think about

what I should do to let myself chase after this goal without any hesitation.”

Yoshiya paused like he was thinking how to express himself.

“.....Then, I met an uncle. Even though I do not think that he started to study hard in his student days in order to come to Japan to buy pens, but if I do have something I feel I must do because of a certain opportunity, then is there anything that I need to do right now, then I remembered the English which I failed before. I am not that intelligent, I will definitely slack if I do not have an easy to understand goal, so I want to choose a more difficult English course as a goal, it is roughly that feeling.”

“.....”

When they came back to their sense, Chiho and Kaori discovered that there were already immersed in intently listening to Yoshiya’s words.

“.....About this, does Mother have any thoughts.....”

Even if he felt confused, Andou-sensei still tried to strike a conversation with Yoshiya’s mother.

“.....Whether it is this child’s older brothers, me, or my husband, we have lived what this child describes as a ‘model life’. My husband is a civil servant, and before I married, I was a teacher.”

“I”

Chiho got a shock. Because this is a fact which she did not know.

But from Kaori's expression, she also was clueless beforehand after all, and right now she was concentrating to hear the conversation within.

“We do not plan to force Yoshiya to work towards that kind of future, and being surrounded by these model-like adults, he must have felt restricted the whole time. My husband and I are worried whether he would feel that we have forced even the future paths of both his older brothers.”

“.....I did not think that way at all.....”

“Basically, since that is his goal, then as parents, we do not plan to interfere. If he has decided to do so, then regardless of good or bad, there will be a result in the end, even though it might cause Sensei trouble, but I still ask you to teach him well.....I do not know why it is Finland, but if he becomes a translator in future, then when we go overseas, we will definitely use him properly.”

The last sentence said by Yoshiya's mother should be directed at her son. From her voice, the impression that she did not care about her son at all was not felt, it was like Chiho's mother Riho, a voice of a mother who constantly worries for her child.

“Since I failed last time, don't expect too much.”

“That is why you have to work hard from now on.”

After that, the three people continued conversing which sounded more like a chat than a discussion, and when the sound of someone getting up was heard

within the room, Chiho and Kaori straightened their posture, acting nonchalant.

But Chiho did not miss it----

“Even though it’s just Yoshiya.....”

Kaori mumbled softly at that time.

Andou-sensei led the Emura mother and son pair out of the classroom.

“Emura-kun, thank you for your time. Next is Sasaki-san.....eh, Sasaki, where did your mother go?”

“Ah, she went to the washroom and will be back soon.....”

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry for the wait.”

Once Chiho pointed towards the corridor, Riho rushed over like she grasped the right timing.

“Hello, thank you for waiting.”

Chiho, who entered the classroom after the Emura mother and son pair----

“Right now, do you still want to work?”

She tried asking this as she brushed past.

Even though Yoshiya did not seem to know why Chiho asked this, but he still pouted in a strange way, looked away and answered,

“Because the both of you are really too naggy, so I should still study first.”

After Yoshiya said this, he walked away quickly, embarrassed.

As for Kaori, she looked at Yoshiya’s back with a subtle expression.

Yoshiya’s change was definitely mainly because of his own will, but thinking that Maou, that man from Finland and how Chiho was like when working has influenced him should not be considered self-conscious.

If she really wanted to voice her frustration was probably because the future path she thought about was already said by Yoshiya. In the future path survey, Chiho also treated the English course at university as a backup.

And the reason was almost the same as Yoshiya.

Because it was something Chiho could accumulate right now and is also what she wants to accumulate at the same time.

This world is a lot wider than what she could see as a student and what she wants to see.

No one can guarantee that what one sees now is the same as what one sees next year.

Even so, then within a range she could reach, the things she needs to fly towards a new world, she must grab them one by one.

Chiho felt that this must be the path she should proceed towards in the end.

A future path is not an end point.

But just a checkpoint in the middle.

Even though she was thinking these amazing thing in her heart, but on the other hand, in order to prevent overlapping the replies she have already heard from Yoshiya, thinking in her mind on how to explain and simulating it, this part of her with a small capacity does exist, and it made her feel a little useless.

“Hm, with Sasaki’s results, forget about the subjects in the humanities group, there are still a lot of universities which you can choose from, anyway you can first talk about the reason why you choose the English course as your first choice.”

The reason for a goal, the motivation for working hard, there was no rule that there could only be one.

Even though it was not like Yoshiya, but Chiho felt that pure admiration was a stellar motivation to set up a goal.

Just like the club she visited not long after entering school, when she saw the ‘Kai’ movement done by the senior with the bamboo bow.

Just like the paper which had her future written as an opportunity, the ‘job’ where she got to know many adults.

She wants to reach that place.

She wants to see the same world as them.

“I want to catch up, with a senior I really respect.”

She wants to stand on the same horizon as that person and experience the same world as him.

※

This is a story from when I was a high school girl who did not know anything.

It is a story where even though I was prepared for changes in the future, I did not expect that the changes which I experience later, was actually enough to change the world, the story of Sasaki Chiho.

Two short weeks after that talk, I knew the truth about that person.

After knowing that truth, my world started to expand in a completely different way from before, causing me, an originally normal high school girl to be involved into a battle where many lives and world situations are at stake.

And this is a story which happened, slightly before this.....

--END--

Afterword

The afterword this time reveals some plots about this volume.

The readers who start reading from the afterword, please take note.

With regards to the jobs and industries which have appeared from Voume 1 to 6 of “Hataraku! Maou-sama”, Wagahara has not experienced any of these occupations before.

But the four stories contained within this book are created with Wagahara’s past experiences as a foundation.

With regards to the main characters of these four stories, other than Demon King Satan Maou Sadao and Hero Emilia Yusa Emi, these fixed characters, I also arranged one other character for every story.

Please pay attention to Maou and the others, and the pages of stories crafted by these people who live various normal lives.

(Demon King, deciding to be an honest merchant)

This is a story which starts 30 seconds after the end of the second volume in the main story.

The theme is ‘Calm down, discuss with someone first’.

Just like the reports on television with the ‘Reality!’ feel, those people’s reasoning are filled with strange logic errors.

One morning, I coincidentally wore a western suit to go out, and on the way to the local bus stop, I was suddenly stopped by someone trying to promote a box of four European pears, this experience became the foundation of this story.

Even though I am not an office worker, but do they really think that a man wearing a suit during working hours would buy fruits.....

(Demon King, taking a stray kitten home)

Before I debuted, the budgerigar who kept me company for sixteen years at my old home passed away because of old age.

Not only did that budgerigar pass away after sixteen years (around 130 years when converted into human years), it was a strong animal which survived cataracts and two cerebral infarction, and the veterinarian who helped that time was a very considerate person.

I pay my tribute to that doctor and hope that all pets can live a happy life.

By the way, the yard in my old home, had cats from the same family giving birth to kittens there 4 years in a row, because they're very cute, we cannot just chase them away, but the log my father bought to grow mushrooms out of interest was scratched by them, isn't there anything which can be done?

(Demon King and Hero, buying a futon together)

My cousin's daughter is one of the reasons for the birth of the character Alas=Ramus, and she grew a lot in just one year, I really got a shock.

And when I was thinking what birthday present to buy for the child of a couple who are my friends, I got many suggestions from the people in the store, and after coming in contact with this personally, I deeply felt that the speed of children's group was unbelievably fast.

If Maou and Emi continue to trouble over it, because they were overtaken by time, they might be forced to face one different trouble after another!

(Work! High School Girl –a few days ago—)

This is a prologue which happens before the first volume of “Hataraku! Maou-sama”, describing how Sasaki Chiho and Maou Sadao met.

This is a newly created story in this book.

Chiho, who is gradually becoming superhuman, at this point, is only a normal girl where it would not be strange to describe her as a high school girl.

The normal Chiho, because the people around her are older, she is a character who is always using polite language.

When I was planning, I only wanted to write a story of Chiho chatting leisurely with her friends, why exactly did it become like this.

Even though people say that if they want to predict the future, even Onis who find it funny, but there are people who say that being able to laugh is a fortunate thing.

Because various deadlines will chase after me like Onis with metal clubs, so for the things which decisions can be made, it would be better to make those decisions earlier.

From the beginning, Wagahara is the type to be chased around and be trashed as a punishment in the end.

Then, when this volume reaches the reader's hands, it would already be after 10 February 2012. After in April, two months later, the anime version of "Hataraku! Maou-sama" will be shown.

Ever since I started this series, right now, the start of the third year is approaching, the world of "Hataraku! Maou-sama" will continue to expand, please look forward to it.

And no matter what developments occur, in order for three meals a day and a happy life, today, they will still treasure normality while working hard every day.

I hope that I would still have a chance to write a book like this one, stories which describe simple normal lives in detail.

Goodbye!

7巻発売おめでとうございます！

電撃大王版コミック作画の柊暁生と申します。

2013年2月現在、鈴乃の登場した辺りを
描かせていただいております。

ヴィラ・ローザ笹塚に華やぎが生まれて、
描いていて楽しいです(笑)

春の
鈴乃さん

柊暁生
㊦

SPECIAL GUEST 01

7巻発売
おめでとう
ございます!!

スピンオフコミック『はたらく魔王さま! HS!』を連載しています、三嶋くろねと申します!

エミリアとアラス・ラムスのコンビが可愛くて大好きです♪

ハイスクール
HS!のコミック
1巻もよろしくですー

三嶋くろね

『はたらく魔王さま! 7』
巻末特別企画



履歴書



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平成××年		東京都立笹幡中央高等学校 卒業
平成1×年		明慈大学経営学部入学
平成1×年		明慈大学経営学部 卒業
平成1×年		株式会社マクロナルドジャパン入社 現職

資格	食品衛生責任者、防火管理者、販売士二級、色彩能力検定二級、マクロナルド・バシスタ、TOEICスコア860		
特技・趣味	仕事、人材育成、料理、旅行		
志望動機	夢を叶える。		
本人希望欄	生涯現役		
通勤時間	徒歩で約15分 可能ならば店に住みたい	扶養家族の有無	なし
		保護者の氏名	なし

『概念送受』修行 基礎編

1 肝心なのは、声に出さなくても意志が伝えられると心と体が理解すること!

自転車に補助輪ナシで乗れるようになるのと同じだ。心と体が「乗れる」ことを一度覚えるまでが一番難しいだろ? 乗れるようになったら、後は色々な自転車に乗れるようになるってことだ。

2 伝えたい「意思」を「エネルギー」に載せて飛ばせば第一段階はクリア

人間なら聖法気、悪魔なら魔力に乘せるわ。でもこれは、道の真ん中で声を出さずに大声を上げるようなものね。これではまだ、伝えたい相手には伝わらないわ。

3 「意思」を伝えたい「相手」を絞り込む

携帯電話は、確実に相手の番号に声を届けてくれるから、絞り込みの感覚を掴むのにピッタリなんだそうです。サリエルさんの言うことだから少し不安ですけど……

4 一対一でやりとりできたら基礎は終了!

一対複数、複数対複数、超遠距離、術者でない者同士の通訳など、様々な応用ができる。が、これは千穂殿だからできる基礎修行だ。本格的に学びたいなら、エンテ・イスラに行くことを勧める。

デザイン



Credits

Hataraku Maou-sama! Volume 7

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